THE RAW INTERVIEW: VINCE McMAHON

WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION®

# Raw magaz

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$3.99 U.S. $4.99 CANADA
PRINTED IN U.S.A.
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WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION®
# Raw magazine
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**World Wrestling Federation Entertainment, Inc.**
**P.O. Box 394, Mt. Morris, IL 61054-0394**



WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION™

# Raw magazine

MARCH 2001 VOL. 6, NO. 3

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World Wrestling Federation *RAW* (ISSN 1087-0164) is published monthly by World Wrestling Federation Entertainment, Inc. © 2001 World Wrestling Federation Entertainment, Inc., 1241 East Main Street, Stamford, CT 06902 and published in Canada by World Wrestling Federation Entertainment Canada, Inc. (GST No. R12189385), 2 Lansing Square, Suite 1003, Willowdale, Ontario, Canada M2J 4P8. Basic subscription rates are $24.00 for 12 issues and $35.00 for 24 issues for U.S. and U.S. possessions. Canadian rates are $30.97 for 12 issues and $55.97 for 24 issues including 7% GST. Foreign rates are $38.40 for 12 issues and $70.80 for 24 issues. ALL ORDERS ARE PAYABLE IN U.S. FUNDS ONLY. NO FOREIGN CREDIT ORDERS WILL BE ACCEPTED. Periodical Postage Paid at Stamford, CT, and other additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to World Wrestling Federation *RAW*, World Wrestling Federation Entertainment, Inc., P. O. Box 394, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0394. Printed by R.R. Donnelley & Sons, Mattoon, Illinois, Manufacturing Division. Distributed by Kable Distribution Services, 641 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10022.


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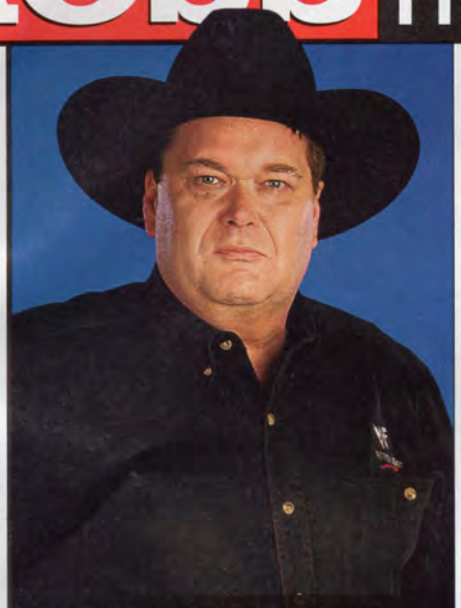
# ROSS From Ringside

By Jim Ross



**Random thoughts and a few questions from under the black resistol hat from an Oklahoman who has the best seat in the house.**

- What would it take for **Stone Cold Steve Austin** to become the most hated individual in the business?
- Is "Hollywood" good or bad for **The Rock?**
- Which young World Wrestling Federation Superstars are preparing to become the next major fan favorites in the WF?
- Why are we force-fed an endless supply of clotheslines in many matches…many that seemingly wouldn't break an egg?
- Superstars who knock competitor's heights are usually tall, insecure people.
- Talent egos and a lack of knowing what most fans want will probably be the death of the **Light-Heavyweight Division** in the WF. (*Not a smart move from where I sit.*)
- If **Test** and **Albert** become students of the game, their individual careers will flourish this year.
- Personally, I'm having a blast with the **XFL**™ and so are a lot of folks, according to the TV ratings.
- Will **K-Kwik** develop some mat wrestling skills to better extend his career?
- What does the future hold for many of the World Wrestling Federation's Divas?
- Is **Steve Blackman** the toughest man in the World Wrestling Federation?
- ***Can You Take The Heat,*** the WF cookbook, still makes a great gift!
- Is it fair that some critics compare **"The One" Billy Gunn** to former WF competitor Lex Luger?

- Is 2001 the year **Kane** loses the mask?
- When the role is called "up yonder" will **Triple H** be considered the best WF champ ever?
- Just how good would **Buh-Buh Ray Dudley** be at 275, not 300 pounds?
- Will **Tazz** and **Raven** continue their deliberate rise up the Federation ladder in 2001?
- Will internal jealousy adversely affect **Too Cool** this year?
- Will today's fans accept more wrestling and less talk?
- **Kurt Angle** is on his way to becoming the greatest amateur ever to turn pro.
- Some radio/TV sports writers are having a field day with lame attacks on the XFL™, primarily because they have a problem with **Mr. McMahon.**

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- Who has more intensity than **Chris Benoit?** (*The Edmonton native has Hall of Fame potential.*)
- Do WF fans want to see more traditional women's wrestling ***or*** catfights?
- Am I the only person who will admit to really enjoying **Kaientai** in tag matches?
- Will **Big Show** and/or **Mark Henry** successfully restart his/their WF careers in 2001?
- Which **Hardy** brother will be the first to turn his back on the other? (*Please tell me it won't be over a woman.*)
- Eat more BBQ!
- Why do some in-ring promos have to be so damn long?
- A book is being discussed by **Bradshaw** and fellow Texan Cody Monk about Bradshaw's colorful life as a jock, Wall Street trader and world traveler.
- Will **Shawn Michaels** don his HBK gear and step back into the ring this year?
- How many established teams in the World Wrestling Federation will split this year to launch singles careers?

Take care and I'll see you back here next month!

J.R.

# THE ROCK SAYS. . .

## WIN A TRIP TO THE WORLD PREMIERE OF

# THE MUMMY RETURNS

## COMING SPRING 2001

Finally, Hollywood knows what "The People" have known all along: The Rock ***is*** a Superstar, not just in the World Wrestling Federation, but on the big-screen as well.

To celebrate "the Great One's" feature-film debut, Universal Pictures is giving one of The Rock's *millions and millions of fans* and a guest the opportunity to attend the Hollywood world premiere of *The Mummy Returns.*

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***Sweepstakes begins 12/12/00 and ends 3/31/01.***
***No purchase necessary/void where prohibited.***

One grand-prize winner will be awarded an airline trip for two, hotel accommodations, and transportation to the world premiere of *The Mummy Returns.* Other prizes include: The Rock and *The Mummy Returns* merchandise.

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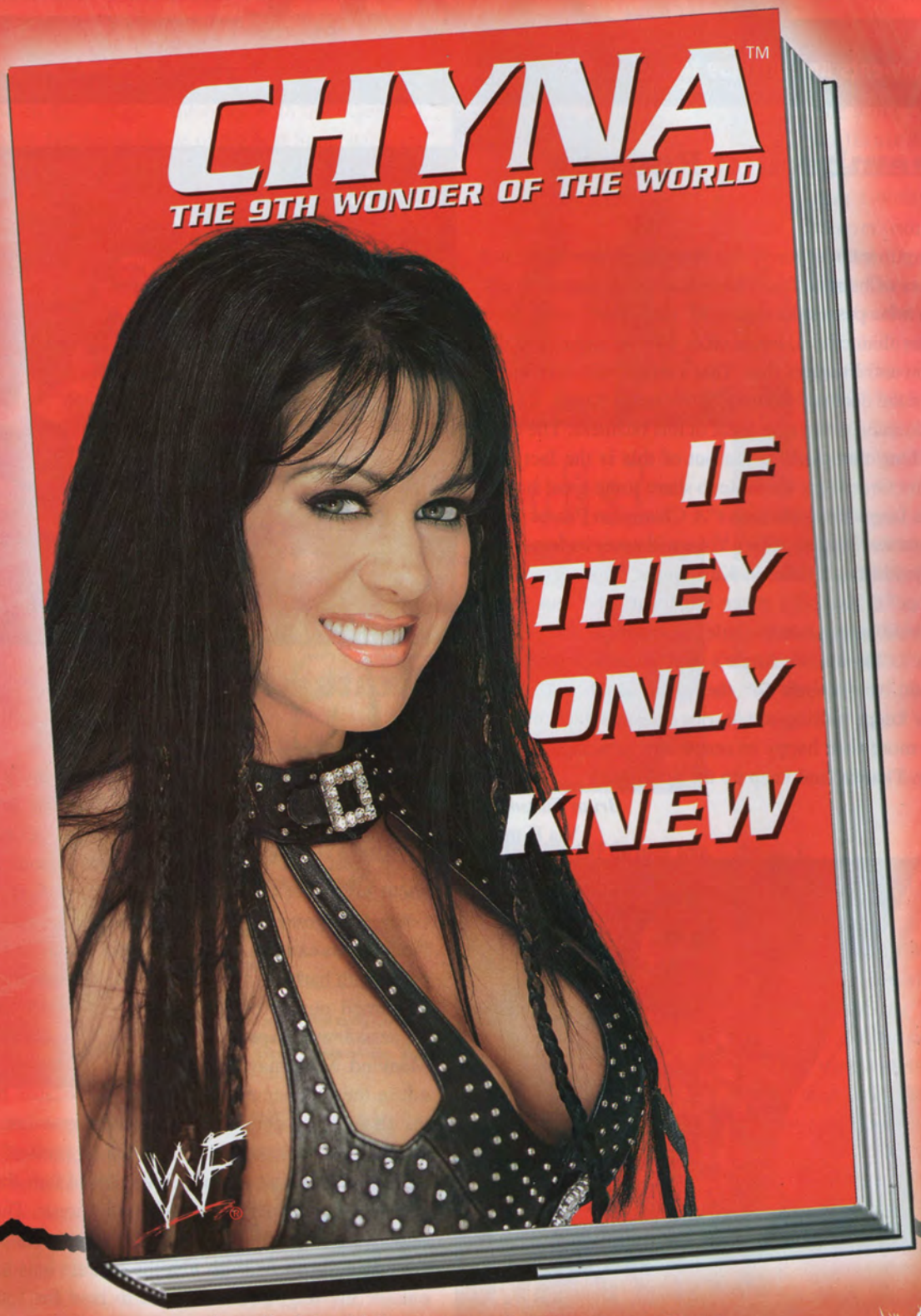


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# fan mail

**Send us your comments and critique to:** *World Wrestling Federation, RAW Magazine, 1241 E. Main Street, Stamford, CT 06902*

## Remembering Rodney

Dear Editor,
I am a longtime fan of the World Wrestling Federation, and in 13 years of being a fan, I have learned to respect every Superstar who passes through a WF ring. Sure, some have been better than others, but it takes a lot to make it to the Federation and I respect that. That's why I was very upset to learn of the death of Rodney "Yokozuna" Anoai. Unlike some, Yokozuna was a true great in this business. The only positive thing that could come out of this is the fact that Keith Elliot Greenberg was able to share some great stories about this larger-than-life man ("A Champion Passes On," *RAW Magazine,* January 2001). Yoko will never be forgotten. I also enjoyed the article on Kurt Angle ("Intensity With Intelligence"). The only other Superstar who can make claim to holding three major titles in less than one year of his debut is Diesel, so Angle's feat is very impressive. Thank you very much for the great articles. If *RAW Magazine* keeps putting out stories like this each month, I will be more than happy to renew my subscription year after year. Thanks, and keep up the good work.

*Brian Kunsman*
Via E-mail

## Fantastic Foley

Dear Editor,
The article entitled "Retirement Hardcore-Style" by Mike Fazioli (*RAW Magazine,* January 2001) was well-written and had a lot of truth in it. It's good to see Mick Foley doing great after wrestling, and I learned something new about his career outside the ring. When I first heard that Foley was going to be the WF Commissioner, my first thought was carnage. I thought he was going to replace the ropes with barbed wire and lay tacks outside the ring. But he turned out to be this *nerdy* type of Commissioner. I guess I was expecting to see him as Cactus Jack or Mankind. Mick may be pure hardcore in the ring, but he's not in the ring anymore, which is sad because he gave us his all in every match. But I must congratulate Mick for doing such a good job of separating himself from the stereotype of pure hardcore. I bet a lot of fans thought that he was going to go insane as Commissioner. There are no Superstars who are willing to put their bodies on the line the way Mick did. I wish him the success he's looking for outside the ring, and can't wait to read his follow-up to *Have a Nice Day* as soon as it comes out.

*Mario*
Via E-mail

## Top-Notch Issue

Dear Editor,
To say that the January issue of *Raw Magazine* was one of your best would be an understatement. I think the best article was "Early Rumblings." I didn't know that Pat Patterson came up with the *Royal Rumble.* This match is my favorite match in the World Wrestling Federation. Another good article was the one on Kurt Angle ("Intensity With Intelligence"). I hate to say it, but Angle is one of the best Superstars, and he works hard to stay there.

*Andrew Wallace*
Via E-mail

## An Appreciation

Dear Editor,
I have only been a WF fan for about a year and a half. I saw my first match on TV about two weeks before *SummerSlam '99.* Since then, I have become a hardcore fan. I've read both Mick Foley's and The Rock's books and am amazed by all they went through to get where they are today. I have to agree with what was said in the November issue about political issues ("Right Is Might," *RAW Magazine,* November 2000). Wrestlers and wrestling fans are looked upon as violence-driven half-wits. This is an unfair assumption. Personally, I like the drama and the action. People are always criticizing the business, yet these same people don't know what they're talking about. Look at Superstars like the Hardys, Dudleys, Rikishi and Mick Foley, these men have sacrificed their bodies for the business, and they have done it voluntarily. They have been thrown from the top of 16-foot cages, 8-foot ladders, and had chairs repeatedly smashed against their skulls. They have done midair flips, belly flops and diving headbutts off the top rope. It takes courage and guts to do what these men do day after day, and I salute them and wish them luck. Keep up the good work!

*Mike Allen*
Via E-mail

## Puppy Lover

Dear Editor,
My compliments to you and your staff. The December issue of *RAW Magazine* is the best gift you could have possibly given this reader. I was absolutely blown away by that sizzling, sensational and stunning cover featuring the gorgeous Debra! It is definitely my new all-time favorite *RAW* cover. (Don't you think that sultry pose would make a great poster? I do.) I didn't realize just how much I really missed Debra until I took one look at this latest and greatest pictorial! The time away from the WF seems to have done

wonders for her! Debra has never looked more in shape or more beautiful. And there's a look in her eyes that makes me excited to see just what she has planned for her competition. She looks confident, motivated and so filled with ambition that I wouldn't be surprised if she pinned Chyna! The other Divas beware, the Queen Diva is back! Thanks, too, for the best interview with 'Taker ("Dead Man's Decade," *RAW,* December 2000) that I've ever read. The American Bad Ass is better than he's ever been. I am totally behind his new persona; it's a big improvement over his Ministry phase! I fully expect Undertaker to blow past all the competition and capture the WF title! As a longtime admirer of both Jerry "the King" Lawler and Michael "P.S." Hayes, I appreciated reading the articles on both these living legends of the squared circle ("In the Valley of 'the King'" and "Badstreet Report"). Keep it up. You've got one great magazine in *RAW.*

*Stephen Lee Roldan*
Aiea, HI

## Total Heinosity!

Dear Editor,
I just finished reading the December issue of *RAW Magazine,* and was disgusted by the lack of respect you showed to Edge & Christian. It was bad enough the article ("No Flash in the Pan") was only three pages long and had one cheap picture, but then you had the nerve to stick it all the way in the back of the magazine. The next time you plan to do an article on Edge & Christian, please give them the respect they deserve.

*Carly Jacobsen*
New York, NY

*(Eds. Note: Dear Carly, I'm sure the boys would agree that a short article on them totally blew chunks. But there will be more stories on Edge & Christian in the near future that will reek of awesomeness!)*

# XFL™ IN THE HOUSE

## Cheerleaders Get *Raw* Crowd Going

**The capacity crowds** that filled the houses in Memphis, Tennessee, Birmingham, Alabama, and East Rutherford, New Jersey, got a special treat when members of the XFL showed up to take in the action of *Raw Is War.* The Memphis crowd was especially fired up when the cheerleading squad for the Maniax (below) climbed into the ring (far right) to say hello! Birmingham Bolts wide receiver Stepfret Williams (center photo, at left) and offensive tackle Ozell Powell give the thumbs-up at ringside. At the Continental Airlines Arena in East Rutherford (right), New York/New Jersey Hitmen head coach Rusty Tillman (center) was joined by equipment manager Tom McVean (left) and defensive coach Bill Urbanik (right). Check out the latest news and updates on the XFL at www.xfl.com!

# in the raw

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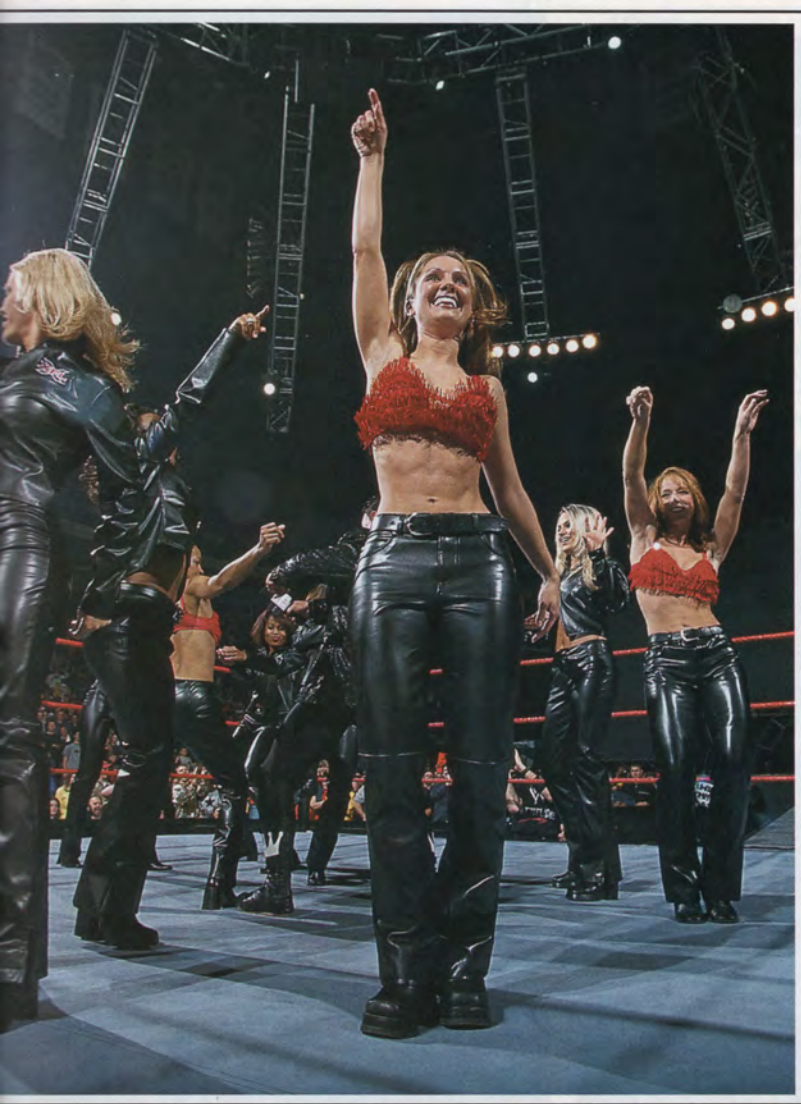


# It's Here!

## "J.R.'s BBQ Sauce" Now Available

**Want a little** spice in your life? Pick up a bottle of "J.R.'s Slobber-Knocker BBQ Sauce" and jazz up your plate! Years in the making, the tasty sauce—from J.R.'s own recipe—adds a special kick to whatever you're cooking up. The bottle with the trademark black Resistol hat on the cap can be found at WF.com, or at the WF New York site-based entertainment complex in Times Square.

# an insider's view outside the ring...

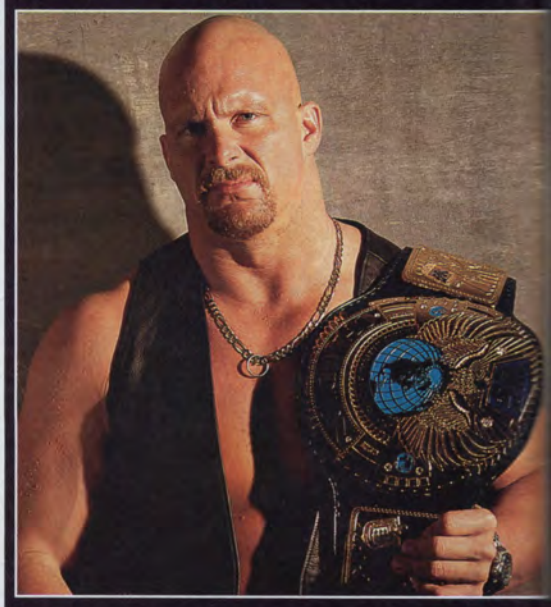
## Flying With Real Attitude

**The friendly skies** have a little more attitude these days, courtesy of the WF. The Federation's new Challenger 604 12-seater jet is used to ferry Superstars and personnel from show to show. The jet has a state-of-the-art flight deck and comfortable seating, not to mention a distinctive paint job that lets people know who rules the skies!

# HO, HO, HO!

**The Federation's holiday party** was graced once again by the presence of a jolly old elf—who also happens to be one of the greatest sports-entertainment legends of all time. Long-time wrestler and manager "Classy" Freddie Blassie broke out his Santa suit and made his annual appearance at the festivities, giving presents to the children of Federation employees. The kids turned out in hordes to receive some holiday cheer from Santa Blassie, who enjoyed handing out the goodies and meeting the little ones.

## THE ODDS SAY...



**British bookmakers William Hill** have posted odds on who will hold the World Wrestling Federation Championship on Dec. 31, 2001. Stone Cold Steve Austin was the favorite at 5-2 odds. Here are the odds on other Superstars:

- *The Rock: 3-1*
- *Triple H: 5-1*
- *Undertaker: 6-1*
- *Kurt Angle: 7-1*
- *Rikishi: 12-1*
- *Big Show: 16-1*
- *Mick Foley: 16-1*
- *Kane: 16-1*
- *Ken Shamrock: 16-1*
- *William Regal: 20-1*
- *Chris Jericho: 25-1*
- *Chris Benoit: 28-1*
- *K-Kwik: 33-1*
- *Shawn Michaels: 33-1*
- *Shane McMahon: 33-1*
- *Vince McMahon: 100-1*
- *Chyna: 100-1*

# STAR POWER

## Soap Heroes Steal Show

**The stars of daytime television** pulled some night duty and enjoyed the action at a recent World Wrestling Federation show. Accompanying Federation Senior Vice President of Consumer Products Donna Goldsmith (center) were *All My Children* stars Josh Duhamel (left), who plays Leo du Pres, and Cameron Mathison (right), who plays Ryan Lavery, on the popular daytime soap opera. The actors know a thing or two about daytime drama, but we'll put our Kane up against theirs (Erica Kane, that is) any day!

TAKE 'EM HOME

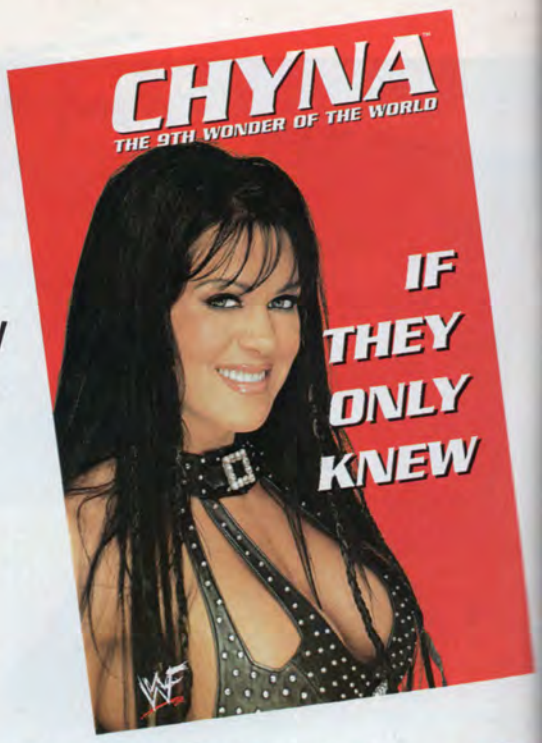
# Hardcore TV!

**The latest releases** from World Wrestling Federation Home Video have a decidedly hardcore edge to them. *Mick Foley: Hard Knocks & Cheap Pops* (also available on DVD) chronicles the exploits of the Federation's favorite Commissioner, while WF *Hardcore* gives the history and great matches of the Federation's Hardcore title. Both titles are available now in stores everywhere. Get hardcore!

# JUST FOR LAUGHS

**"You're a boxer, not a wrestler!"**

**The latest Superstar to join the World Wrestling Federation's growing legion of top-selling authors is Chyna, whose autobiography, *Chyna: If They Only Knew*, from ReganBooks is currently on sale. In this book, Chyna takes readers on a highly personalized account of her less-than-ideal childhood and the many travails and trials that eventually led her to success, fame and status as a cultural icon in the Federation. *RAW Magazine* is pleased to bring you an excerpt from her book, in which Chyna describes her first professional match, wrestling in the independent ranks for her first ring mentor, the legendary Walter "Killer" Kowalski.**




# NOW THEY'LL KNOW: CH AUTOBIOGR

Independent wrestling leagues were the backbone of big-time pro wrestling. Ohio, Indiana, Tennessee—all these loose confederacies provided entertainment for middle America. That's where it all started, really. Jerry Lawler, our ring commentator, owned a fairly large league in Memphis for quite some time. It was even televised on a local affiliate. Vince McMahon and his father began buying up the small leagues, along with their talent, to eventually create the empire that gives you *Raw Is War, SmackDown!* and, coming soon to a stadium near you, the XFL™...

But most of these independent leagues were cheesy folding-chair shows, usually held in high-school gyms or VFW halls. The promoter charges maybe five bucks, pumps in a little Whitesnake or Poison, and pays his nieces and nephews minimum wage to sell the concessions. Like nachos, with cheese that comes in big ol' coffee cans that he could buy in bulk at the Food Warehouse, and soda—partial-fills he could get at the docks of the local bottling company. In that, er, no-man's-land before the WF hired me, I worked the independents—Moolah, the legendary female wrestler from the '40s and '50s, had one; Liz Chase did, too, among others. The talent should really be called something else. You don't wrestle, you throw people around. Some fat chick sits on your head and thinks your skull is made of stone. Hers seems to be, anyway. You get hurt a lot in the independents because the skill is at the "see level." If you're in the audience, you see all the punches [and] kicks that don't connect, and the blood when someone does connect. And the costumes! Red flannel tights. Dog collars. Lots of Marilyn Monroe wigs. Glitter and football eye-black. Sometimes you drive for five hours to make 25 bucks. The promoters pay you in a back room, and sometimes they don't pay you at all. Threaten them and you'll never get the chance to be stiffed again. Checks bounce. Once I had to sell my spare tire for gas. But it wasn't about the money. We would've all done it for free, and all of us did the independents—Hunter, Kane, Mick, Undertaker, Stone Cold, Billy [Gunn], everyone paid the same kind of [crappy] dues. So when Walter told me that day that he would pay me to wrestle in one of his shows, well, I *flew* home. At least I think I did,

# YNA'S REMARKABLE APHY HITS THE SHELVES

because I don't remember driving. Boys and girls, a dream had been brought to life! A wish had been answered. Sure, I broke my tailbone on his [expletive] hard floor, but wishbone, tailbone, who's complaining? I was gonna wrestle for 30 bucks! Oh, my God, I don't have a thing to wear…

Marshall's. I high-tailed it to Marshall's, bought this pink bathing suit on sale, and got another 10 percent off because it had this tiny grease spot on the left butt cheek. At the fabric store I bought bags of glitter and a couple of yards of stretch lining, sewed the whole mess around the middle of the bathing suit so I had this glittery waistband. And I bought these terrific ivory-colored stockings. The afternoon before the match, which was an hour-and-a-half drive over to Worcester, I did my hair, at the time a shade best described as crab-apple, blew it dry, fashioned it, hated it, washed it again, and started all over, finally getting the pageboy I wanted without some of the ends flipping the other way like busted guitar strings. Then I dressed and studied myself in the mirror. As I recall, I looked like a ballerina in a porno movie, but at the time I thought, "Yeah! Apple pie. I am apple pie." Started talking to my imaginary opponent. "Hey, [expletive]. Yeah, you. C'mere and get your spanking. Huh? What'd you call me, [expletive]? *Poser.* You wanna call me something? Start with Lawry's. 'Cause I'm gonna pepper your bubble-ass and beat the ugly into your face. I am gonna *tenderize* you like a chicken, pretty lady. Girl. *Girlie, girl.*"

* * *

"What the hell, Walter," I kept saying. "What the hell." It was 10 minutes before my match and he was preparing my opponent, this 180-pound *man.* "What the hell, Walter—I thought I was gonna wrestle a chick?"

"You are," Walter insists, stuffing fake breasts inside this poor guy's leotard.

"A real chick. You said a real chick."

"Never used the word real. I couldn't book anybody this late."

"But he has stubble, Walter—" Before I could finish Walter shoves this bizarre-looking latex mask in my face. It's for the guy to wear.

"Okay? Nobody's gonna know. You wrestle him, you'll learn something. He's good with flips, very quick, runs around the ring a lot, makes everything look smooth."

Sure, it would've been easier on both of us just to wrestle man against woman. But this was early on and in the independents, where you wrestled in places like the local AFL-CIO headquarters, the Knights of Columbus hall, or the Fin, Fur and Feather clubhouse, the only place people wanted to see a woman compete against a man was in a chili cookoff or on *Jeopardy!* Guys just didn't smack the ladies around; they saved that for the home. Also, we're talking about '94, '95, which in the grand cultural scheme of things, wasn't a high point in terms of how shocking we could all get. Springer, Howard Stern, reality shows, MTV's *Real World,* "America's Most Botched Circumcisions"—these forms of entertainment were pretty much in their infancy. And for better or worse, as they caught on and led to *Survivor, Big Brother* or even some chick flashing her [breasts] at Katie Couric on network TV, they made it a little easier for me to wrestle men in the WWF. But at the time of that 30-dollar match, well, dare-to-be-different wasn't gonna play just yet.

"Okay, okay," I said to Walter. "I'll wrestle, I'll wrestle…"

"Just make sure not to bodyslam him and make his boobies go funny."

And so I fought my first match for money in front of 40 people, and it was good. My match partner turned out to be cooperative and obliging, and Walter had us fight each other another three or four times in the indies. Oh, yeah—his name was Raindrops. Don't ask. ■

---

Chyna: If They Only Knew *is available now from ReganBooks at most bookstores.*

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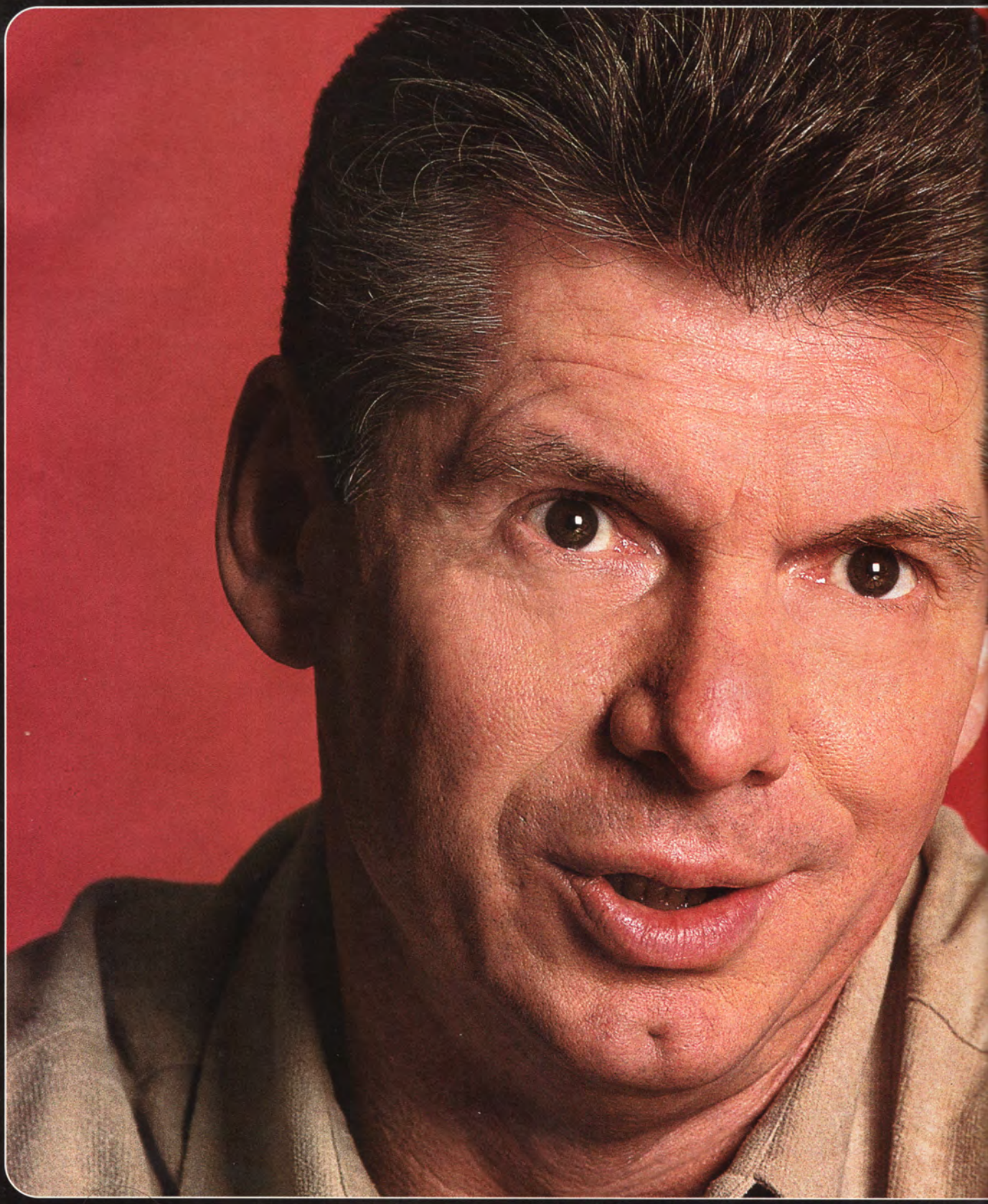

# CHAT WITH THE CHAIRMAN

**Vince McMahon has been called everything from a marketing genius and New Age entrepreneur to a con artist corrupting the American public. As the Chairman of World Wrestling Federation Entertainment, Inc., he has established himself as one of the most influential and controversial figures in the entertainment industry. Never one to mince words, Mr. McMahon agreed to sit down with *RAW Magazine* to discuss a myriad of issues related to his personal and professional life, as well as address future possibilities for the company to which he has dedicated so much of his life.**

***RAW Magazine:*** *History suggests that sports-entertainment is a cyclical industry. What's your response to those who say that given the amount of exposure the World Wrestling Federation gets, it can't sustain its current level of popularity?*

**Vincent K. McMahon:** First, let's address the cyclical nature of sports-entertainment. I guess to a certain extent it is, but only in the same way that every other entertainment company is also looked at as being cyclical. Yet, it's not really cyclical. You have some years that are very good, and some years that aren't quite as good. The key, of course, is to stay away from the losing years.

When you think about it, you should compare the World Wrestling Federation to other major entertainment companies or motion picture studios. For instance, Warner Bros. has very good years. They may have three, four, five or six [good years] in a row, and then they may have a year that's not as good because some of their movie releases aren't really what the public wants to see. That's what it's all about: Having your finger on the pulse of the marketplace, and making sure that you give the public what they want. If nothing else, our company has mastered that. We do have our finger on the pulse of the marketplace, if for no other reasons than having all these live events and listening to our audience all the time. By listening to our fans—using that as a marketing tool—we have a formula for long-range success.

As far as sustaining our popularity, I believe we can. We are currently in primetime twice a week for two-hour events each. Quite frankly, I prefer 90-minute events. I believe that given the audience attention level, we could

**By Aaron Williams**

do an even more compelling 90 minutes. I wouldn't want to get down to an hour because that's not enough time to tell good stories. But, we could do more than two nights if we were doing 90-minute specials—90-minute motion pictures, if you will. I don't think it would be at a saturation level, either. It just has to be a good, fresh product.

***RAW:*** *You have so many talented Superstars here. Are you worried about egos, having enough playing time, if you will, for everyone?*

**VKM:** That's always a problem, no matter how many hours you have, but it's a nice problem to have. In the real world of competition, the players want to compete and they want to compete at the very highest level. They don't want to be mid-card, much less in a preliminary match. They're always fighting for the spotlight and that's tough to reach, because those who have it are fighting just as hard to stay there. So it's real competition. Again, the nice part about it is that we listen to our fans, and they're the ones who really decide who is ready to break through into that top echelon.

***RAW:*** *There are those who say the World Wrestling Federation is losing some of its "Attitude" and becoming more "corporate." Do you see it this way? And does the Federation have to operate differently now that it is a public—and much larger—company?*

**VKM:** I think there are certain business matters which we must now conduct differently than we used to. However, as far as "Attitude" is concerned, I would disagree with the premise that we've lost our edge. I do think that it's more difficult to tell stories sometimes. If we use less expletives, does that mean we're losing our edge? If that's the case, then that means our Superstars must learn to expand their vocabulary.

It's all about communication. It's more than just hurling an expletive, which after a while becomes crass. I think one of the biggest mistakes that our detractors make is when they say "The WF is sleazy. The only reason they're successful is because they use an occasional expletive, have scantily clad women and such." If you're looking for that, you can find it anywhere on television and in more abundance than in our programming. So no, I don't think we've lost our edge at all. I do think it's more difficult for us, as we go forward, to maintain our "Attitude," but I do think that we're doing a good job.

***RAW:*** *How has the transition to Viacom gone?*

**VKM:** I think it went moderately well. We were moderately disappointed in some of the promotion for some of their channels. TNN is difficult to find sometimes. We are working with them to help the audience at large—much less our audience—find TNN. We're working on a lot of ways to help them expand their horizons. We've already done for them what they thought we would do, by bringing the vast audience of the World Wrestling Federation to their networks, not just TNN but MTV as well. We've done our job, but it's important for us to continue to do that. We need to continue to grow those networks because the appeal of MTV is to a limited demographic compared to the much larger demographic which the

WF attracts. At the same time, as a general broadcasting entertainment network, TNN has a lot of growing to do. It needs to acquire more quality programming like the WF, and it is. I think it's going as well as can possibly be expected with a fiercely independent, maverick organization [like the WF] working with two corporate gorillas like Viacom and NBC [for the XFL].

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***RAW:*** *Where did the idea for* WrestleMania *originate, and what does it mean to you?*

**VKM:** The idea came to me while Linda and I were on vacation, which is something we don't often do. I have to do something with my mind, or I'll get in trouble. I'm always thinking and have to have things to do. When I'm on vacation here in the States, I can do all kinds of stuff; I can train and keep busy. But, we were in the Caribbean, and there was nothing to do. You could swim, make love, eat and lie in the sun. I'm not too good at lying still in the sun. I can do that for about 10 minutes, then I've got to walk around. It gave me a lot of time to think.

[By 1984-85] there had been a number of Super Bowls, and there was no reason why we couldn't take our product and have our own Super Bowl-type event once a year. And that's really what *WrestleMania* represents—the beginning or the end of the year in the WF, depending upon your point of view. It's the culmination of so much. It's the biggest event that the Federation will present each year.

***RAW:*** *You've been called just about everything—good and bad—in the press. Are you hurt by the negatives, flattered by the positives, and do you think you are treated fairly?*

**VKM:** I would dare say that most anyone in public life, if they stay in public life long enough, is not treated fairly. It doesn't matter who you are, it still bothers you when you're not treated fairly. Now, I just pick up the phone—generally, it's the phone because most people won't see me personally, some won't even take my call—and have the opportunity to get it off my chest and tell them what [expletive] they are and so forth, and I feel better about it. It doesn't take back what they've said, however.

I do think the standards of the media have dropped to an all-time low in terms of credibility. That crossover of whether it's entertainment or news is the biggest crock of b.s. in television today, because it's all entertainment. I liken the people in the news [industry] to the people in the *rasslin'* business of 20 or 30 years ago who were trying to convince the audience that it was real, 100% sport. It never has been and never will be. It's the greatest form of sports-entertainment in history, and the audience loves it for that, but at one time, this industry was lying to the public. I think the news people are right where the old wrestling promoters of yesteryear used to be, lying to the public by saying, "This is in the name of news." No, it's not. It's in the name of television ratings. It's in the name of attracting a higher rating, a higher-quality sponsor and ultimately more money. It's all about that.

***RAW:*** *What role has the Internet played in all this?*

**VKM:** I think that the Internet—and I do love the free flow of ideas on the 'Net—is like the wild west of the information world. One of the problems with the Internet is that a lot of times it is inaccurate. So I think, in as much as I applaud the Internet, it has contributed to the acceleration of what was already in decline. The standards are being lowered, not just on the Internet, but in all of news and media. The crap with this past presidential election [continues to reflect that].

So, I get a kick out of working with the media. We just bypass them and go straight to the public, our consumers, and level with them. We're straightforward with them and always will be. We bust our butts for them, as we should. We love our fans, so there's nothing we wouldn't do for them, and we go directly to them. Whatever the media says doesn't matter much.

***RAW:*** *How about the things that the media say which are directed at you personally?*

**VKM:** From a personal standpoint, the old expression of what doesn't kill you makes you stronger is somewhat true. Again, I think there are individuals who I'd like to meet in a dark alley somewhere and have some fun with only because they are liars and cowards. But generally speaking, I don't know. In America it's live by the sword of freedom of expression and be willing to die by it as well. This company, more than any other entertainment company I know, does. So we're living by that sword, and we're going to get cut every now and then from its backlash. There are good and bad people in everything and that goes for the media as well.

We're going to be treated very poorly, I think that goes with the territory, and you have to get over it, get beyond it and know who you are among your peers and especially among your family when you look in the mirror. If you've got those bases covered, then you can flip the bird at the media.

## WORD ASSOCIATION

*RAW: PTC?*
VKM: Sucks. An organization that wants to take away my freedom of expression.

*RAW: WCW?*
VKM: Disappointment.

*RAW: ECW?*
VKM: Throwback to what the business used to be.

*RAW: Hulk Hogan?*
VKM: Disappointment.

*RAW: Ted Turner?*
VKM: Adversary.

*RAW: Jesse Ventura?*
VKM: Respectful.

*RAW: Jim Ross?*
VKM: Dedicated.

*RAW: The Rock?*
VKM: Flamboyant.

*RAW: Steve Austin?*
VKM: Consummate professional.

*RAW: Kurt Angle?*
VKM: Gifted.

*RAW: Hardy Boyz?*
VKM: Reckless youth.

*RAW: Howard Finkel?*
VKM: You have to love him.

*RAW: WWFE?*
VKM: The McMahon family crest.

***RAW:** When good things are said about you, does that flatter you? What do you think when they say Vince McMahon is a genius?*

**VKM:** First of all, that's b.s. I'm not [a genius] by a long shot. Those things don't flatter me because they don't know what they're talking about. This is such a team effort. The contributions and sacrifices of so many people in this organization through so many years have created this sensation.

I know what I do, and I have a pretty good gut feeling [for what the public wants] because I am the common man. That's who I am. I understand the common man because I understand me in that regard at least. So, if that's a gift, and I think it is, it's a gift that is exploited. But other than that, no, I'm not flattered by what I read when people call me a genius and things of that nature because I'm not. I'm a real common sense guy who caught a lot of good breaks and who has been very, very fortunate. I'm the luckiest man I know in the whole world. With my lifestyle and my background, it could very easily have been, "I shouldn't be alive today." With all the many near-death experiences and things of that nature and the environment in which I grew up, it could have easily gone the other way.

***RAW:** What motivates you today?*

**VKM:** I don't know what has ever motivated me. I guess maybe another gift I have is a great work ethic. As a child, you had to keep me busy, otherwise I'd be busy in a negative way. I really don't know what makes me run. I haven't a clue. I look back on my dad and other relatives, and they didn't have the kind of drive that I have. They were wonderful human beings and very well-balanced. I don't know if I'm necessarily as well-balanced as they were. I don't know what drives me, I don't have a clue, but I'm driven more today than I have ever been.

***RAW:** With so much going on these days, how much time can you devote to your different endeavors? Is it difficult to delegate things you used to do yourself?*

**VKM:** You do have to delegate as you grow. There's no question about that. And you have to delegate not only the responsibility of things, but also the

authority. You have to recognize that some things won't be done exactly how you would have wanted them done. But because our organization has grown so much and in so many different ways, the delegation process places responsibility and authority on the shoulders of people you can watch grow and watch the way they treat others. This organization is different from any other in the entertainment business where it's this cutthroat [expletive] world out there. There is a great deal of deference, a great deal of respect shown to one another, and a great deal of teamwork. There is also a lot of competitiveness and a lot of testosterone and estrogen, and that's just wonderful. But it's just different than any other entertainment company that's out there.

***RAW:** Is your life much different now with so much going on?*

**VKM:** I don't really think so. After all, you can only do so much in a 24-hour period. I was doing whatever I could do in that same 24-hour period 20 years ago, and I'm simply doing the best I can now. That's the answer. You do the best you can every day. It may be on a different level, but it's still the best you can. After that, you can't worry about it. You've got to let it go. After you've done the best you can, there is nothing more you can do.

***RAW:** Has that realization kept you from burnout?*

**VKM:** I don't know. A lot of people have burned out around me. I don't know that I've come close to burning out because I enjoy what we do so much. The biggest thrill in the world is entertaining the public, there is no bigger thrill than that.

***RAW:** Do you still get a rush coming out to the crowd at live events?*

**VKM:** Oh yeah, but I live vicariously through every one of our performers. So I get that rush when they go out. There's really no difference. As long as there's a response, there's a rush.

***RAW:** What frightens you?*

**VKM:** Let me see. There aren't any humans who frighten me. I guess one of the things I'm not too fond of is heights. I wouldn't quite say that frightens me, though. I don't know.

***RAW:** Are you afraid of failure?*

**VKM:** No, I'm definitely not afraid of failure, and I don't think anyone else should be afraid of it, either. I think that's a tremendous advantage that we have as an organization and maybe one that I have personally, too. I'm not afraid of failing. I don't like to fail. I hate to fail. But I'm not afraid of it. I think from a long-term strategy standpoint—and I'm very long-range oriented—if you're not afraid to fail and you have a well-planned strategy and are good at taking calculated risks—not just risk for risk's sake—then chances are your batting average is going to be pretty damned good. Will you fail on occasion? Sure. But it's like getting knocked down. I'm not afraid to get knocked down literally or figuratively. When that happens, you just get back up. There have been times when people got tired of knocking us down, because we just kept getting up. And then we knocked them down, because they got tired. So I think not being afraid to fail has been a personal and professional asset.

***RAW:** Who do you admire and who were your greatest influences?*

**VKM:** I really don't know. I really don't admire a lot of public figures, but the one who I have most admired was Martin Luther King, Jr. I think I could relate to and admire him more than John F. Kennedy, more than anyone in modern U.S. history. Even above that, would be my dad and my family.

***RAW:** How about people who influenced you?*

**VKM:** I don't know if there's any one person who has been profoundly influential. But if I had to say other than my dad, it would be my grandmother. She helped rear me, and she always had a home for me whenever I needed it. She was someone of very high ethical standards, yet she never stood on a soapbox and never preached. Her wisdom was doled out in actions.

I remember when she was in her 60s, she was concerned because a kite or a ball was stuck in a tree. I had begun to climb the tree, and she made me come back down so that she could go up and get it. She had a very, very strong work ethic as well and was a grand, grand lady. I have nothing but love and

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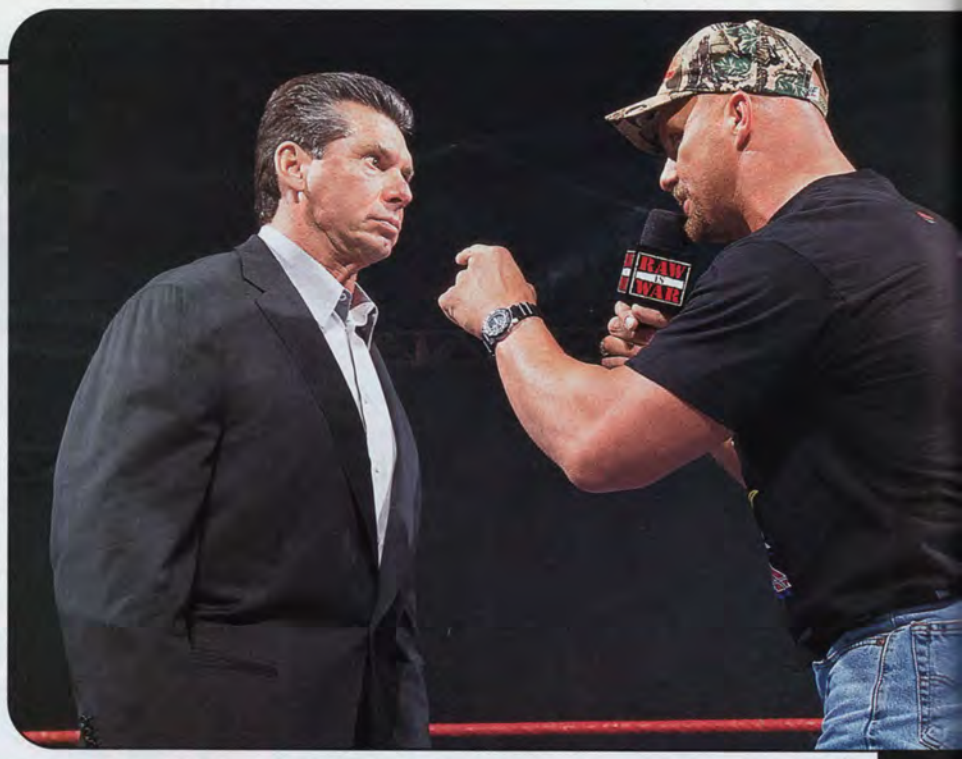
respect for her. She had a big influence over me.

*RAW: Are you looking forward to becoming a grandparent?*
**VKM:** Can't wait. I scare women now. I scare moms in airports and places like that where there are babies, I'm so attracted to them. I can't wait to be a grandfather. And Linda, her heart aches to be a grandmother. We both love kids, and I've said many times that we should have had a dozen. It happens that we had, as far as I'm concerned, the greatest kids ever in Shane and Stephanie, but I'm really looking forward to becoming a grandpa. I can't wait.




*RAW: In the last couple of years, what are you most proud of?*
**VKM:** Shane and Stephanie. It's been difficult for both of them, and it remains difficult. It was difficult for them to grow up in my house. Shane's very competitive, and more like my dad in that he's more even-tempered than me, but it's very difficult for him and he's handled his position—and who I am—so well. It's very frustrating for him sometimes because I'm such a strong personality. But it's worked and it continues to work, and I'm so proud of his accomplishments both as a performer in the ring and in the corporate world. And the same of Stephanie.

They both grew up in the business, Shane was on the ring crew and stuff like that. He learned to referee and to announce and learned to do it all, he even worked in the warehouse. During the summers, Steph was a receptionist and worked at the television studio. I believe in paying dues. I believe in paying dues every day.

I've always had the theory that no matter what I or anyone else in the company has accomplished in the past, and I relate it to me more than anyone else, no matter what you've done the day before, guess what? You wake up the next morning completely naked, so now you have to go on and earn your clothes today and the next day, and that's what life's about. I love that challenge because I think that you have to earn the respect of the people you work with every day and earn the respect of your family every day. You just can't take that for granted. You certainly have to respect your fans every day as well and never take them for granted.

## XFL™ FILES

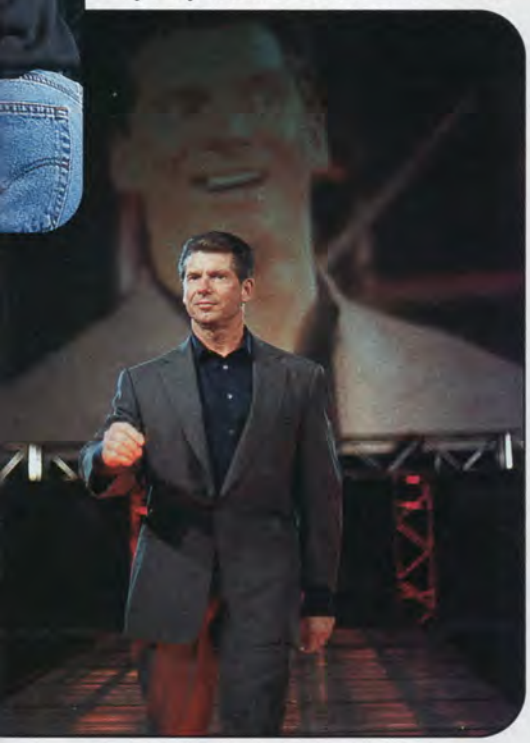
*RAW: When did you get the idea to start a new football league?*
**VKM:** I've been kicking it around for about four or five years. It's all about timing. You have a lot of things in your head and you say, now is the right time to do it. All of a sudden, you just know that this is the time.

*RAW: Did you ever think about owning a franchise in the National Football League or another sports league?*
**VKM:** Not really. I don't play well with others when it comes to baseball or even football. Baseball once had a guy by the name of Bill Veeck. He had a lot of creativity and so forth, and they sort of

sat on him. And the NFL people are all about control. All about the league controlling everything. A maverick like me would not work well in the NFL. Now, I did at one point in time consider buying the Minnesota Vikings when they were for sale, but I didn't really have my heart in it. I also don't think they would have allowed me to buy the team because of the maverick nature of this organization and the free spirit that this organization brings. It's tough fitting in with control freaks like the suits in the NFL.

*RAW: How big an undertaking was it to get the new league off the ground?*
**VKM:** It's been a challenge, no question. But Basil DeVito is eminently qualified, more so than anyone else in the world to have gotten this off the ground in the amount of time that he had to do it. He and his staff did a magnificent job. They've just been amazing.

***RAW:** Did you want your children to follow in your footsteps, and would you have been disappointed if they hadn't?*
**VKM:** No, not at all. As a matter of fact, I never pushed the business on either of them. Unlike my dad who didn't want me in the business and told me so and did everything he could to keep me out of it, I never put barriers in front of them. At the same time, I never encouraged them that this is their life, and this is the way they should live it in this environment. It was there if they wanted it. I would have been just as happy—don't get me wrong, it's a thrill working with them everyday—if they had wanted to do anything other than this.



I didn't really know that Stephanie wanted this as a career until after her junior year of college. I was like, "Okay, you're majoring in communications, but what do you really want to do? And she looked at me aghast and said, "What do you really mean by that? Dad, I just want to be in the business, that's what I've always wanted. You know that." I said, "Well, I didn't know that." And she said, "I just want an opportunity to work in the family business, that's what I really love." So I was thrilled with her answer, but I'd have been just as happy if she or Shane did something else as long as they did it well. All I ask of them is to try and be the very best at whatever it is they are doing?

***RAW:** What do the McMahons talk about at dinner?*
**VKM:** Everything imaginable; from my dog Ruckus to anything. Shane, by the way, is excellent at mimicking people. Whether it's me, his grandmother or whomever, he's classic. He breaks us all up. It's a wild time, though, because anything can happen. The wrong word can be said and it sets one of us off and we just deal with it. It's never dull at the McMahon household.

***RAW:** Who wins in a match between you and Shane?*
**VKM:** Depends what kind of match. If it's a match in which I could use all the dirty tricks that I've learned through the years, then I might win. If it's a straight-up match—I'm 55 and he's 30—then he kicks my ass. So it all depends on the match.

***RAW:** Over all the years you've been involved in the business, are there any moments that stand out as extraordinarily special?*
**VKM:** I have a habit of not looking back. I always look forward, so I don't dwell on a lot of past history. I certainly don't dwell on many of the negatives of past history because you learn from the mistakes and bad things. At the same time from a positive standpoint, I guess those are things that you expect to happen. So many wonderful things have happened to me in my life and there have been so many exhilarating moments professionally and personally that it would be a disservice to categorize them. There have been so many that it wouldn't be fair to rank them. ■

It was very difficult to get the XFL off the ground. Things like this are usually planned out years in advance, with their T's crossed and I's dotted, but that's not the way we do things around here. First and foremost is the timing aspect of it; if it is the right time, then go do it. And then, it becomes a work in progress. You have the general points down on what you want and how you are going to execute them, and then you go from there.

***RAW:** How and when will you be able to measure its success?*
**VKM:** I think we can measure it right now. There's so much talk about the XFL.

***RAW:** Is there a "grand plan" for the XFL and should we expect it to expand in the near future?*
**VKM:** The XFL will grow based upon demand and our resources. Potentially, the XFL business model has more

franchises in more cities than the NFL. The reason for that is because we can be in what the NFL considers secondary markets. We can be in places like Syracuse, New York, where the NFL would never go. So we have plans to grow. How we ultimately do it will be determined based upon our fans demand and our resources.

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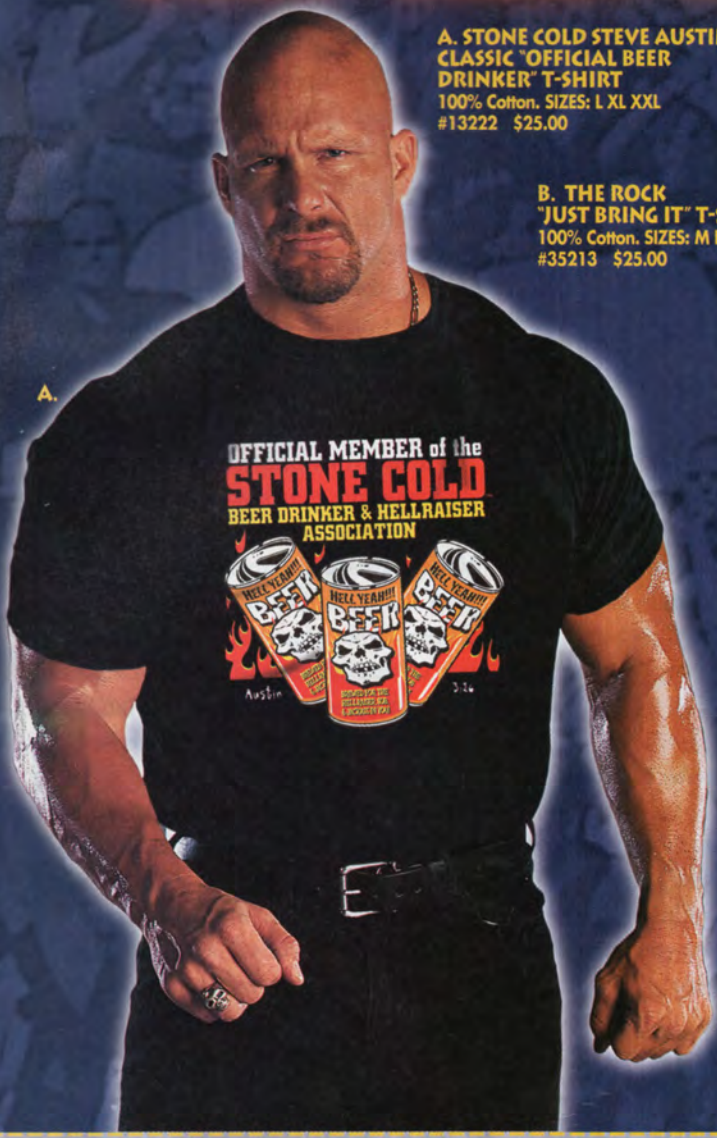


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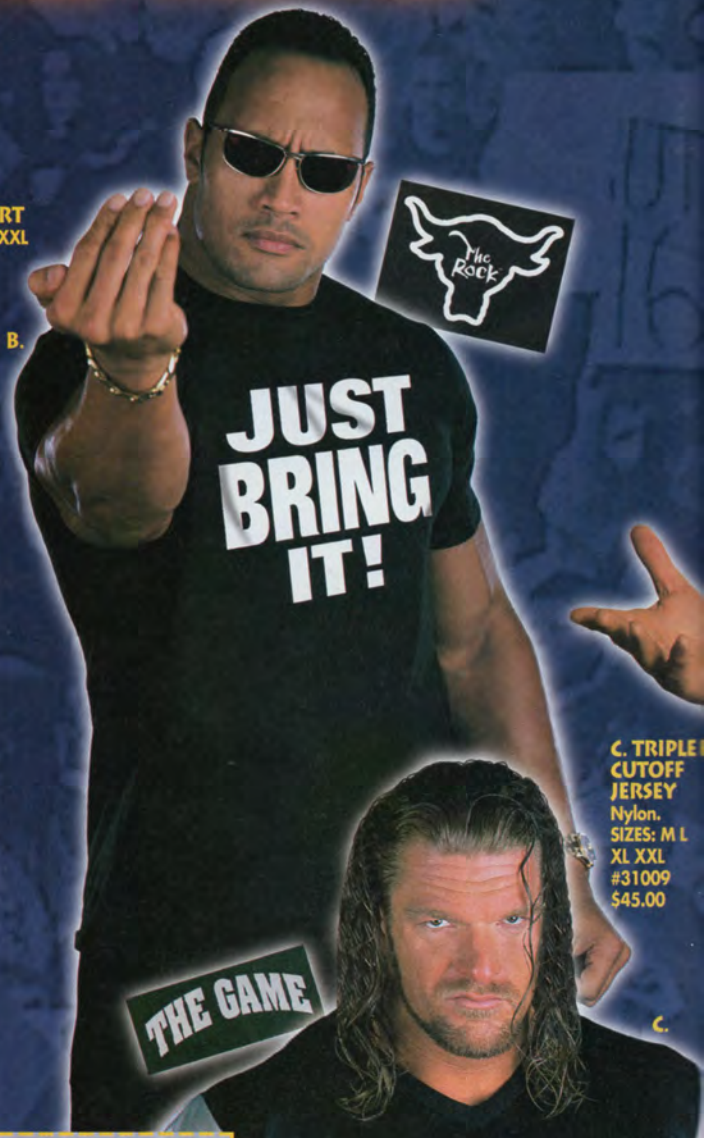


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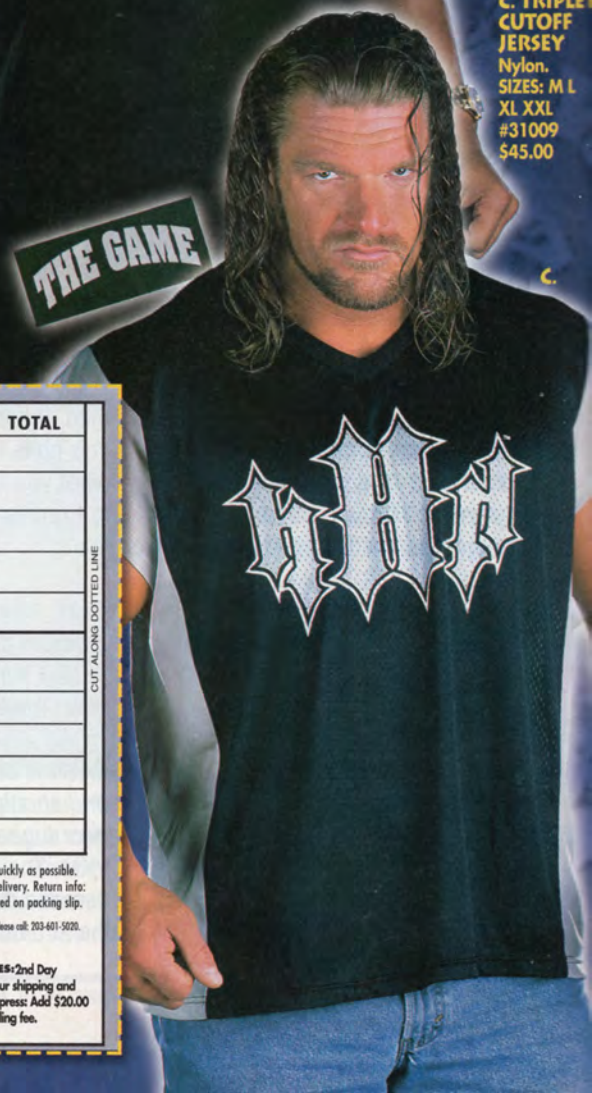


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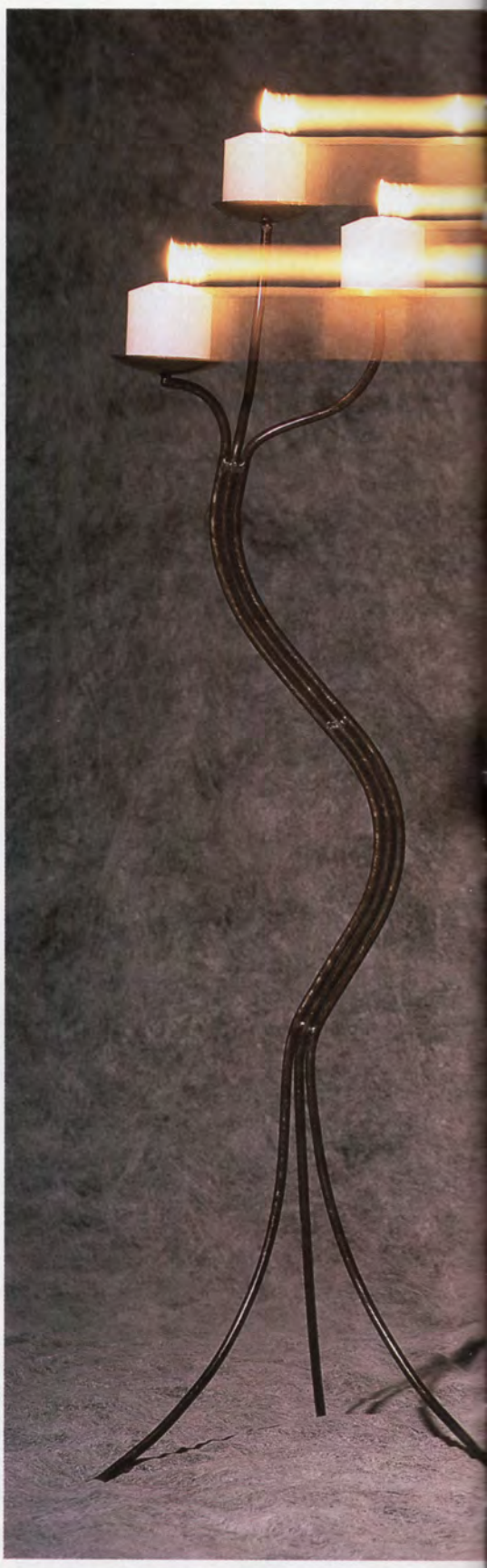
# Strike a Pose

## Thanks to Yoga, Tori's Return to the Ring Is Now a Reality



Tori's sports-entertainment career has been riddled with unfortunate injuries. Fused vertebrae, two blown-out knees and, most recently, a separated shoulder are all on the list. When discussing her return to Federation action, she makes it clear that it may not have been possible without the ancient Eastern fitness technique known as yoga.

"What I had lost most was cardiovascular conditioning," Tori explains. "I'd really taken some steps backward during my shoulder surgery, so [getting] my conditioning back would be difficult to do if I only knew the standard ways to do it. I don't know how I'd have gotten back in cardiovascular shape without yoga."

The former D-Generation X Diva had been making progress in recovering from her shoulder injury, but had not yet reached the point where the joint had settled into its normal position. After receiving clearance from physical therapist Craig Wood, she returned to yoga to build up the muscle surrounding the shoulder joint. After two classes, her shoulder had settled properly in place.

"When I went back [to physical therapy] and showed him that, he was blown away."

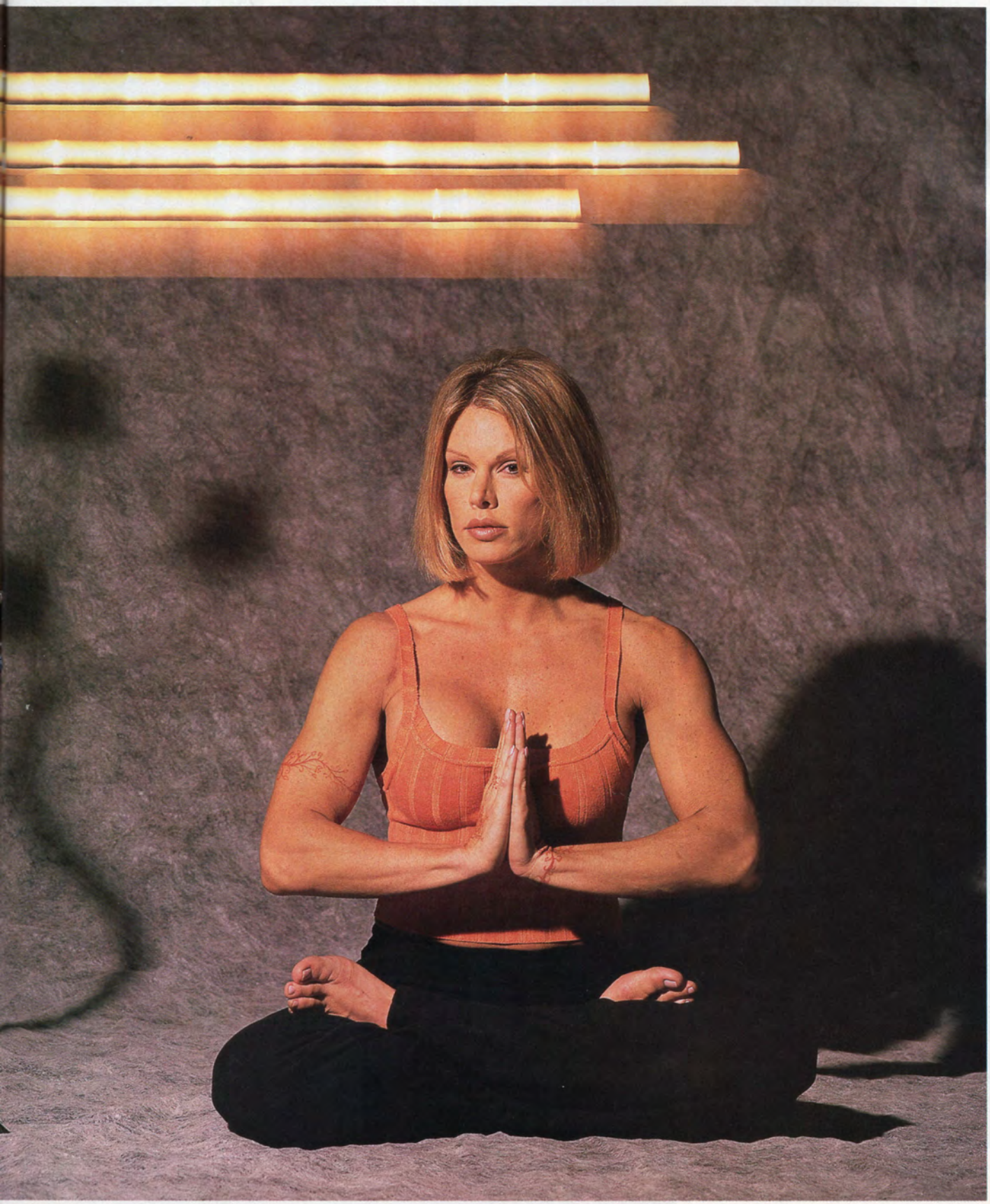
After a couple of weeks of additional yoga training, Tori was back in the cardiovascular shape she had been in prior to the recent injury. She believes that without yoga, such a thing wouldn't have been attainable.

As reported in the August issue of *RAW Magazine* ("Body of Work"), Tori spent a great deal of her early career competing in Japan. In those days, weight training made up the vast majority of her training routine, which she feels hampered her ability to keep up with the athletically demanding Japanese style of wrestling.

"It took me a year to reach a level where I was able to have a 20-minute match and not get blown up," she recalls.

Tori later took a sabbatical from the world of sports-entertainment, and in 1997 made the discovery that would change her life. At the time, she was studying belly-dancing at a fitness center when she found that a yoga class was also being offered. Her interest was piqued, and a recommendation from her

by **Brian Solomon**



## Bow Pose (*Dhanurasana*)

**One of the most graceful yoga postures, the Bow helps straighten rounded spines, relieves backaches, and permits maximum expansion of the lungs, thereby increasing oxygen intake. It is of great benefit to the internal organs, improving the function of the intestines, liver, kidneys and spleen. The Bow Pose also revitalizes spinal nerves by increasing circulation in the spinal area. It improves digestion and strengthens abdominal muscles, upper arms, thighs and hips. It greatly improves muscle flexibility in the torso and upper arms, as well. Dancers and athletes make use of this pose to increase the flexibility of the hip joints in particular.**

belly-dancing instructor further encouraged her to attend.

"That first class [was] the most difficult thing I've ever done," she remembers, "but it was also immediately the most rewarding thing that I've ever done."

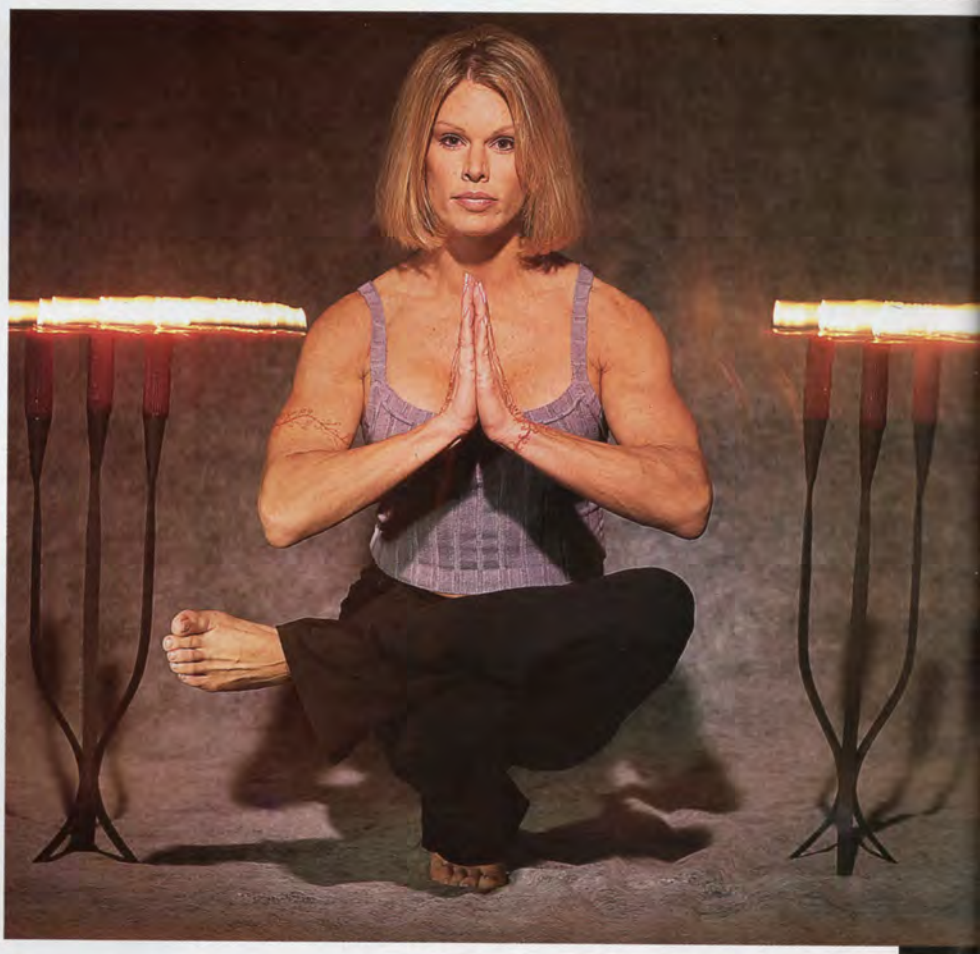
After trying out the class, Tori eventually hired her own personal yoga instructor and moved on to more advanced techniques. The complex postures—known in yoga as *asanas*—proved quite challenging, but Tori was determined to master each one.

In 1999, she returned to the ring, making her World Wrestling Federation debut. After being out of action for four years, Tori was now taking on tough opponents like Ivory and Jacqueline. But despite her long period of inactivity, she found she was actually performing better than she had been back in Japan—something she attributes largely to the intensive yoga training she had been doing since that time.

Once she had progressed to a satisfactory point in standard yoga, Tori graduated to a specialized style known as Bikram yoga. The discipline is named for its founder Bikram Choudhury, an Olympic weightlifter who crushed his knee at the age of 17. Doctors told

## Toe Stand Pose (*Padangustasana*)

**This *asana* is one of the more difficult to hold for an extended period of time. It develops both psychological and mental skills—especially patience. Physically, practitioners believe it cures gout and rheumatism of the knees, ankles and feet. The knees in particular are greatly strengthened by the Toe Stand Pose. In constant use, the knees are among the body's most easily injured parts, and it's well known that knee injuries are the most common in sports. The Toe Stand *asana* is highly beneficial for keeping knees strong and flexible. In addition to patience, this posture helps develop some of the other qualities essential to yoga: faith, self-discipline, determination and concentration.**



Choudhury that he would never walk again, but using yoga techniques taught to him in his native India, he was able to rehabilitate his injured knee. He began to adapt and develop the ancient postures, and not only was he eventually able to walk again, but he avoided permanent damage as well. The technique he formulated in the process is what became known as Bikram yoga.

A demanding 26-pose program designed to be performed in a specific order, Bikram yoga is intended to relax the mind and strengthen the body. It involves expanding the lungs through deep-breathing exercises, and balancing poses, which are intended to work virtually every muscle, ligament, tendon and joint in the body. It is typically practiced in a room with a temperature ranging from 98° to 105° Fahrenheit. The goal is to learn how to breathe normally in that environment for the duration of each 90-minute session.

Since becoming a faithful student of yoga, Tori has learned not to automatically put faith in Western fitness methods, and has, in fact, come to distrust them. She still works out in the gym, but her training routine has been enhanced and reshaped by her knowledge of the Eastern technique.

"You can't get it all done in a gym," she says. "No matter how much you try, the weights themselves will not do it. When I'm training with weights, I stand in yoga postures. I make sure that the pelvis is lifted and the legs are flexed. When I combine all of it, my weight training is much more efficient."

Years of experience and dependable results have convinced Tori that yoga is the best way to stretch, tone and balance the body. She says that practices recommended by Western medicine not only are ineffective, but are sometimes detrimental. She has learned to trust the proven results of her yoga studies over the suggestions offered by "standard" fitness experts.

"Getting on the Stairmaster, for example, I was just grinding on [my knees] and not really seeing the effects of it. You get off the Stairmaster, and have to put some ice on [your knees]. That's kind of what athletes know as training. Why we ever settle for that, I'll never know.

"All the stretches that really help you learn how to open up, [Western medicine] labels as hazardous," she continues. "We're taught out of fear. You're teaching your body to be half-balanced. But [now] you see a lot of doctors embracing holistic health."

Tori is very pleased by the way yoga, and Bikram yoga in particular, has improved her condition and overall well-being, and is enthusiastic about recommending it to anyone who might be interested. She feels it is the ideal road to a fit body and is very outspoken about what it has to offer.

"Yoga is an adventure," she proclaims. "When you start going to a class,

you're not gonna get it on the first day. Every new day in class is a discovery. It's kind of like a martial arts thing. Even for the obese person who has limited mobility, I say 'Go.' Yoga teachers who have gone through yoga certification do not have a problem if somebody with injuries or maladies comes into a class. Nobody's embarrassed. You don't get a sense of competition in a yoga class."

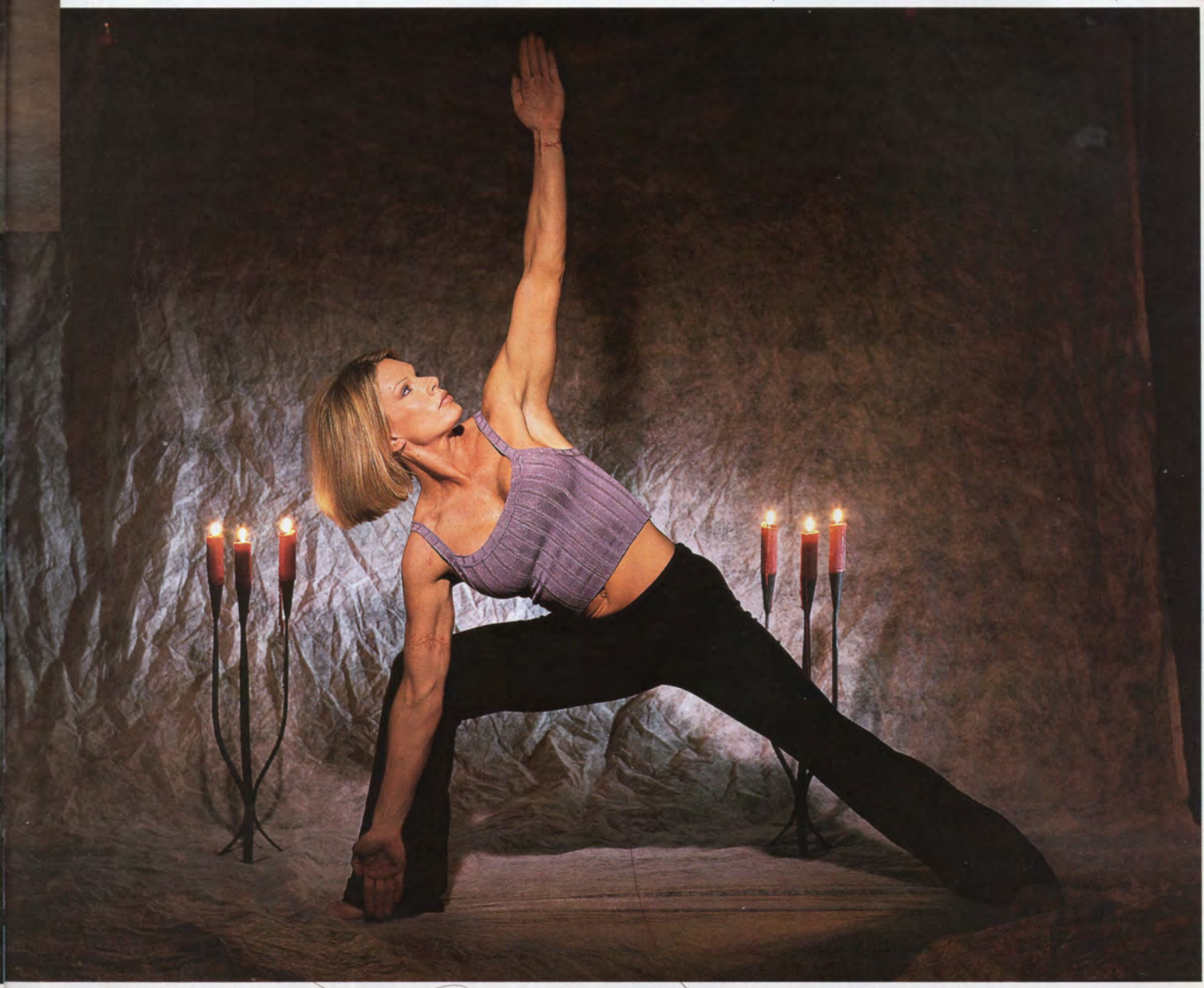
To find out more about Bikram yoga, Tori recommends visiting the Bikram yoga website (www.bikramyoga.com). The site includes listings of Bikram studios all over the world, where the technique is taught.

Her return to an active role in the Federation has further strengthened Tori's belief in the benefits of the Bikram method. Looking ahead to the distant future, to a time when she will no longer lace up her boots to compete in the squared circle, Tori still sees yoga as a part of her life, perhaps even more so than it is now.

"After my time in front of the camera," she asserts confidently, "whenever I'm done, I am going to Bikram to get my certification, and I will have my own studio. When I'm 98 years old, I want people to go, 'Wow, is that a gymnast?'" ■

## Triangle Pose (*Trikanasana*)

**The Triangle is the only pose in Bikram yoga that improves every muscle, joint, tendon and internal organ. It also revitalizes nerves, veins and tissues. Practitioners believe it helps cure rheumatism of the lower spine by flexing and strengthening the last five vertebrae, and it improves crooked spines. This is the most important *asana* for increasing the strength and flexibility of the hip joint, as well as the muscles of the side of the torso. It firms the upper thighs and hips and slims the waistline. Among the many muscles it improves are the deltoid, trapezius, scapula and latissimus dorsi.**



# ...action!

## The Rock Stands Poised to Conquer Hollywood

By Mike Fazioli

**The Rock gets a trim in preparation for his guest-hosting role on *Saturday Night Live.***

It's equal parts charisma, magnetism and presence, with a few other things mixed in. It's an ultra-rare quality that the biggest stars are born with, and wannabes strive to imitate. Yet you won't find it in any dictionary. In Hollywood, it's simply called *it.*

The movie industry is always hunting for the next great star, the one with enough *it* to carry a movie, a series of movies or even a whole studio. Lately, the word around Hollywood is that they might have found someone who flat-out has *it.* This should come as no surprise to anyone who's ever seen "the most electrifying man in sports-entertainment" hold tens of thousands of World Wrestling Federation fans in the palm of his hand night after night.

"You can see it on the WF shows. The Rock has that intangible quality," says Jim Jacks, producer of the upcoming Universal movie *The Mummy Returns,* due in theaters in May. "What that creates are movie stars. And movie stars are always people who have that certain something that isn't quite defined. With The Rock, we saw it in the dailies. He just jumps off the screen. He has that presence."

Enough presence, in fact, for Universal to ink The Rock to star in *The Scorpion King,* a prequel to *The Mummy* and *The Mummy Returns,* long before his work in *The Mummy Returns* hits the big screen. The Rock's deal is one of the most lucrative contracts ever for a first-time starring actor.

The Rock's role in *The Mummy Returns* is the Scorpion King, an ancient Egyptian warrior who, in an effort to have revenge on those who destroyed his village, sells his soul to a malevolent god and becomes an evil half-man/half-scorpion entity with vast powers. He extends this role into *The Scorpion King,* which is a prequel to *The Mummy* series and is being looked at by Universal as a potential franchise of its own, with an opportunity for several sequels. *The Scorpion King* is due in theaters sometime in early 2002, with Chuck Russell (*The Mask, Eraser*) set to direct and Oscar-nominee Michael Clarke Duncan (*The Green Mile*) signed to co-star.

For someone who has yet to make his big-screen debut, there's definitely no shortage of praise. The all-important "buzz" around the industry is that The Rock's role in *The Mummy Returns* could put him on the map in the same way that *Conan the Barbarian* did for Arnold Schwarzenegger, and that a big showing by *The Scorpion King* could be akin to Arnold's famous *tour de force* in *The Terminator,* which transformed the former Mr. Olympia bodybuilder into the action-adventure icon of the past 20 years.

Said one unnamed Hollywood source: "The Rock has the personality, charm, charisma, physicality and looks to be a leading man in all genres in Hollywood. He is the complete package, and a true entertainer. This is not easy to find in today's sports or entertainment stars. It's star power, and it's a very rare commodity."

And how does all this sit with The Rock, who is—as hard as it

**The Rock's role in *The Mummy Returns* could put him on the map in the same way that *Conan the Barbarian* did for Arnold Schwarzenegger.**

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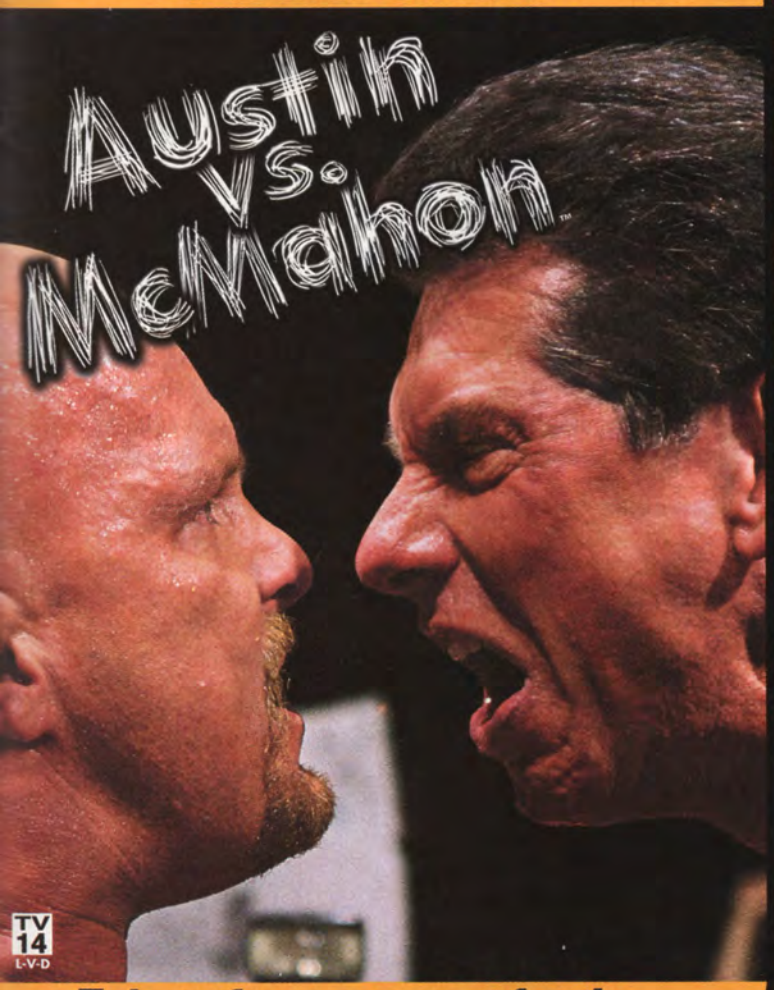


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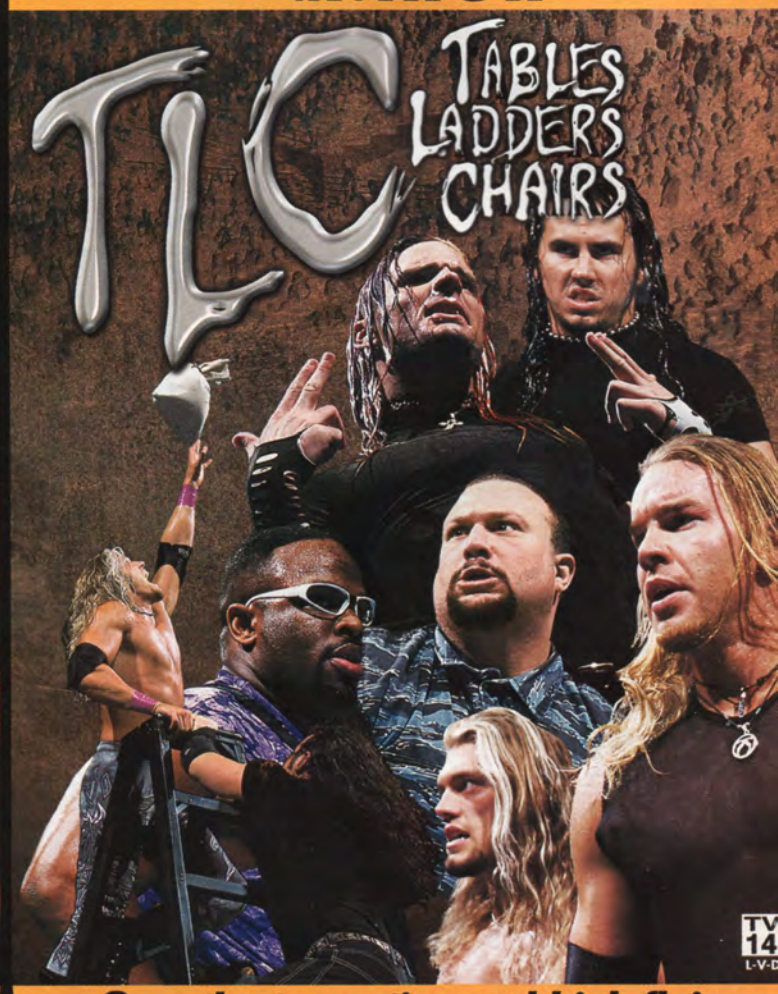


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**The Rock has even ventured into the realm of popular music, making a guest appearance on hip-hop superstar Wyclef Jean's Rock-inspired single, *It Doesn't Matter.***

is to believe—only five years removed from his WF debut and three years into his run as an elite main-event Superstar? Much the same as his meteoric rise in the Federation has; he is humbled, honored and grateful, but he's eager to take the ball and run as far as he can with it in his new career, as he has done with his in-ring career.

"I never fathomed the success I've had in the World Wrestling Federation. I just wanted to be the absolute best at what I do, and do whatever it takes to get there," he says. "It just happened that in that process, doing what I do now enabled me to open up a lot of doors. One of those doors was to the movies. I never anticipated doing movies or acting or anything like that."

**It's his extra-Federation exposure that has swung the gates of Hollywood wide open to The Rock.**

Certainly, it would have been tough for anyone to anticipate just what a cross-media impact The Rock has made. He's appeared on numerous talk shows and had roles in several television shows, including guest-host of *Saturday Night Live.* He has written a best-selling autobiography, *The Rock Says....* He made a high-profile TV appearance at this past summer's Republican National Convention, taking the podium with Speaker of the House J. Dennis Hastert (R-IL)—the man third in line for the White House. He also was named to *People* magazine's "Most Intriguing People" and "Sexiest Men Alive" lists. All this on top of being at the vanguard of sports-entertainment's greatest spurt of popularity ever.

It's this extra-Federation exposure that has swung the gates of Hollywood open for The Rock. With his crossover appeal firmly established, he's carrying the ball for himself—and, by extension, for the Federation—into previously uncharted territory.

"[Movie success] would epitomize so much more than being a modern-day WF Superstar if it takes off like it's anticipated to do," The Rock says. "These are the little things that add up. To be talked about in the opening monologues of Jay Leno and Rosie O'Donnell, things like that. And *People*'s "Most Intriguing People" article on me was well-written. The media has done a fairly good job accepting The Rock. That article talks about, '[Secretary of State] Colin Powell wows them at the convention, so does The Rock. [Russell]

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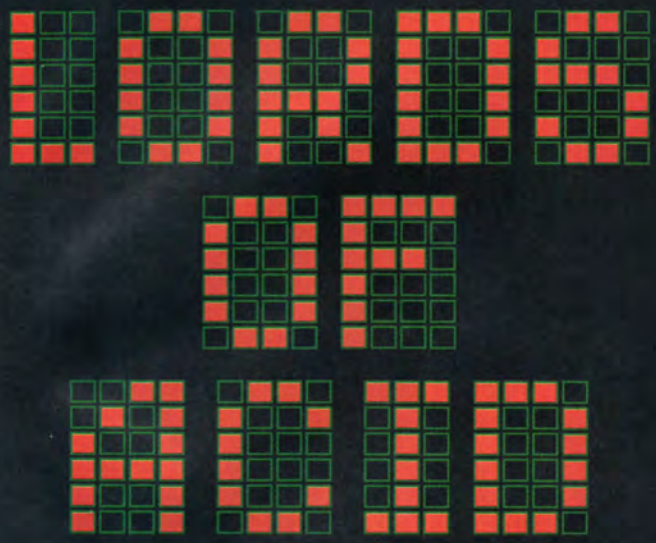

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Crowe signs a multi-picture deal, so does The Rock.' And it wasn't one of those sarcastic articles, you know, 'Yes, people, it's hard to believe, but The Rock is popular.' The articles are no longer condescending.

"I'm excited by all this. I'm very proud to be a part of the World Wrestling Federation's boom, and I've said I want to take the brass ring of the Federation to places it's never been. I want to continue to do that."

The Rock's whirlwind trip with the brass ring kicked into high gear in March 1999, with his first TV role, an appearance on the short-lived series *The Net.* From there, he made appearances on *That '70s Show* (playing his father, former Federation Superstar Rocky Johnson) and *Star Trek: Voyager,* earning praise both times as a natural performer, and whetting his appetite for more acting roles.

**"If we're going to make the splash we want to make and put the Brahma Bull stamp on Hollywood, the first movie out of the gate has to be *The Scorpion King*, not a comedy."**

His true breakout performance came on March 18, 2000, as guest-host of *Saturday Night Live* and playing no fewer than half a dozen roles on the program. Critics and *SNL* cast members and writers alike were pleasantly surprised by The Rock's comedic talents, and by the ease with which he tackled the challenge of live television. Since then he has added another comedic appearance on NBC's *DAG,* starring David Alan Grier and Delta Burke.

Yet, considering that The Rock does at least four hours of live television every week for the Federation, his ease in front of the cameras shouldn't have surprised anyone.

"Obviously, our WF programming has given me the opportunity to expand my role and create a lot of depth within my character," he says. "I'm able to do a lot of things and show a wide range of emotions, which has been a key element to the success of The Rock. *Saturday Night Live* was a fantastic opportunity to showcase some things."

Aside from his blossoming acting skills, his television appearances—*SNL* in particular—showcased the most important facet of The Rock's Hollywood appeal—ratings. His episode of *SNL* pulled in an estimated 20 million viewers, scoring the show's highest ratings in a year, and outperforming *SNL*'s season average by 31 percent. His appearance on *Star Trek: Voyager* outperformed that show's season average by 21 percent.

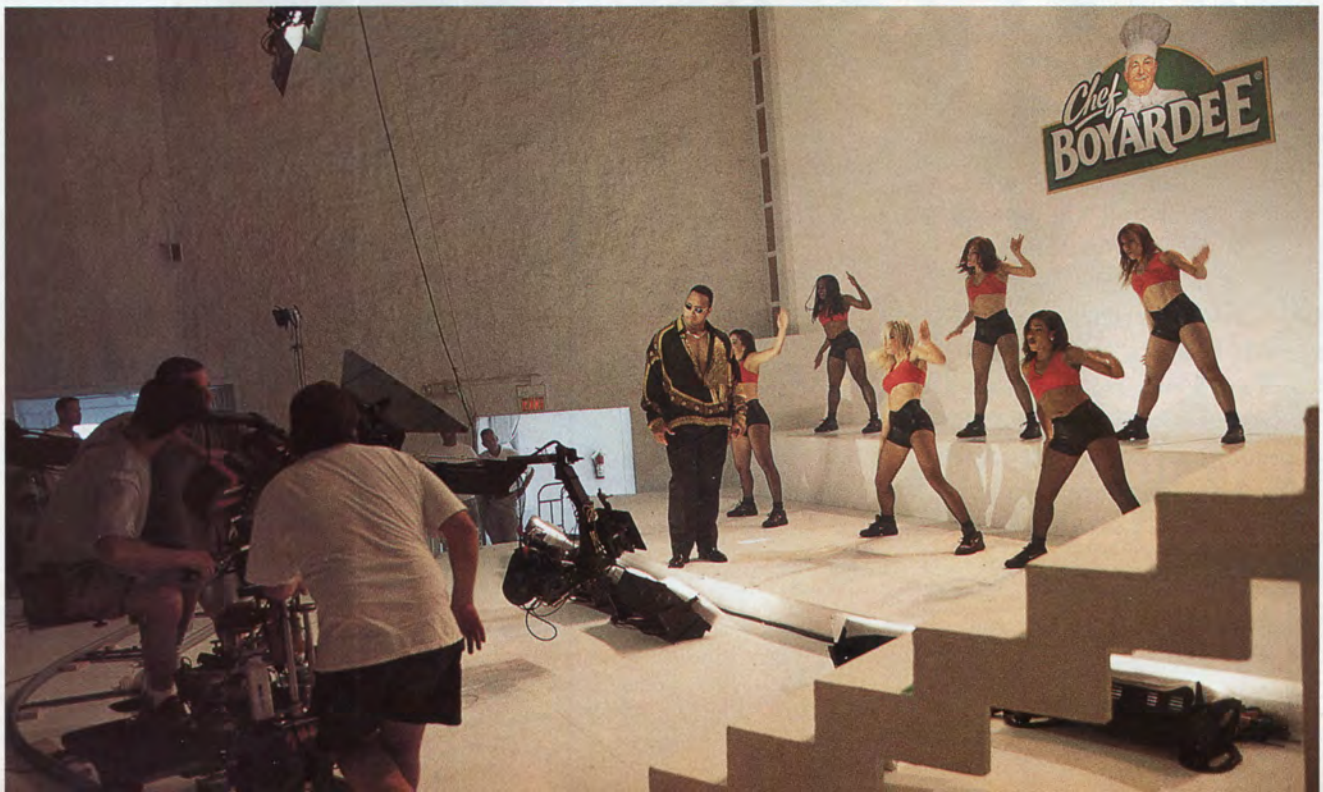
His appeal and talent established, the talk quickly moved to motion pictures. Competition was fierce, with several studios in contention to land The Rock for his first big role. Eventually, Universal signed him to *The Mummy Returns* and *The Scorpion King*. But one of the early plans that was discussed involved The Rock making his debut in a comedy, shooting a script originally written for David Spade and Chris Farley before the latter's death. Names that were considered for co-stars included Oscar-winner Cuba Gooding, Jr. (*Jerry Maguire*) and *SNL* alums Chris Rock (*The Chris Rock Show*) and Rob Schneider (*Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo*).

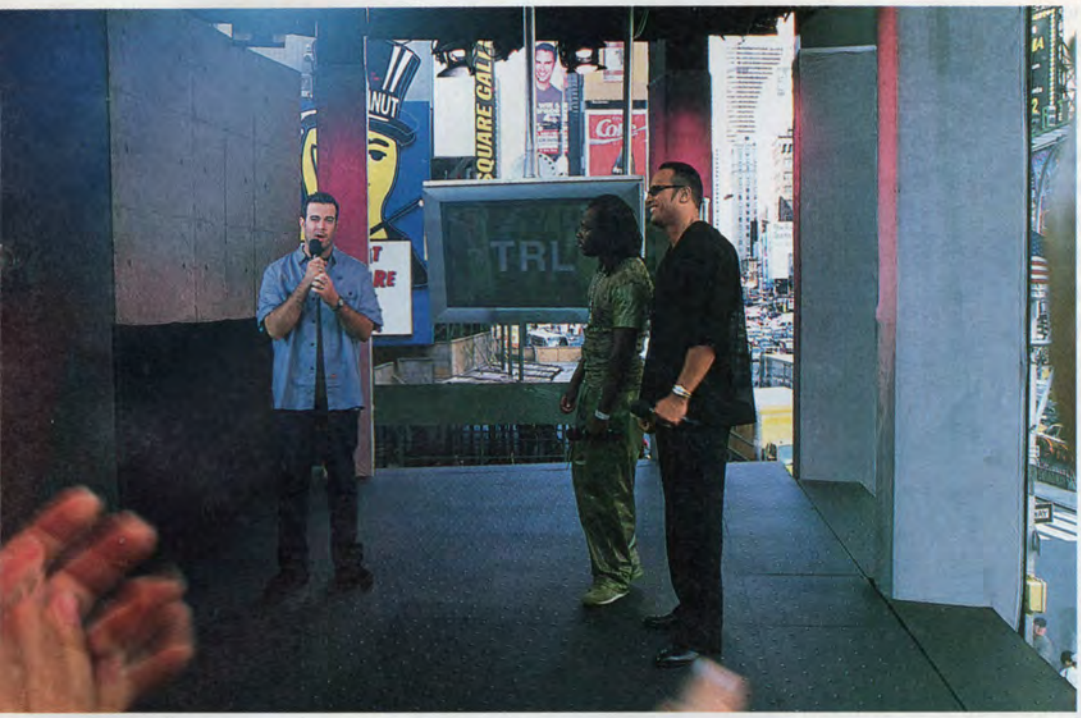
"We may revisit that," says The Rock, who adds that he's willing to try roles in any genre. "But with the type of film *The Scorpion King* is, in terms of being a franchise, if we're going to make the splash we want to make and put the Brahma Bull stamp on Hollywood, the first movie out of the gate has to be *The Scorpion King,* not a comedy."

The Rock won't say if breaking into movies is harder or easier than either of his two other high-profile ventures—major college football with the University of Miami Hurricanes and the Federation. At 18, he entered the world of top-level college football with no small measure of trepidation, away from home for the first time and joining a program which had just won its third national championship. His Federation debut, in 1996, was made easier by the fact that he had grown up in the world of sports-entertainment, spending countless hours at arenas and backstage courtesy of his father Rocky Johnson and grandfather High Chief Peter Maivia, both former Federation Superstars. Rather than fear or nervousness, The Rock says, he entered the Federation with limitless excitement and hyper-intensity.

But, as The Rock is quick to point out, sports-entertainment and film roles are two very different entities.

**Among The Rock's ventures is commercial work, including this spot for Chef Boyardee. Within five years of his Federation debut, The Rock has become a television mainstay.**






**Appearances on MTV's *Total Request Live* (left) and *Access Hollywood* (below) enhanced The Rock's stature in the entertainment world.**

On a movie set, there's no live crowd of screaming, chanting, energetic fans to feed off, and a great deal less spontaneity. While a Federation show is a two-hour-plus, non-stop tornado of raw emotion, athleticism and passion, making a movie is more repetitious, with multiple takes and long breaks.

"[In the WF] we do have the advantage of performing in front of 20,000–30,000 people, as opposed to just the people on the set," The Rock says. "Obviously, it's a lot different than what we do [in the Federation]. It's very taxing—take 11, take 12 and so on. In trying to convey the emotions you need to convey on the set, you have grip guys, camera guys, makeup guys...to convey those emotions you need to concentrate a lot more, as opposed to being in our venue and feeling the electricity of the crowd. On the set, everyone is wondering when we can take five or go for lunch.

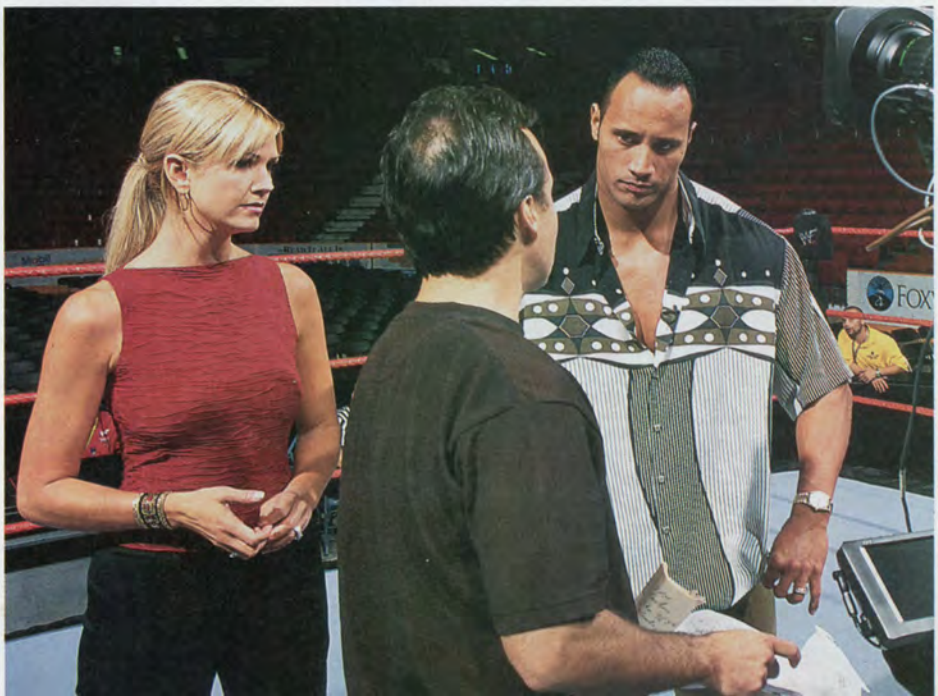
"Nothing compares to the WF, period," he adds. "Nothing compares to the anticipation of hearing your music, going out there, hearing the pop and being able to tell a story. Always entertaining the fans and knowing that I'm entertaining them—that's the goal, to entertain the fans—nothing compares to that. I heard a quote a long time ago that I never forget: 'You can be a character and entertain only yourself, or you can have character and entertain millions.'"

The Rock got a taste of life on the set while filming *The Mummy Returns* in the arid heat of the Sahara Desert. As physically demanding as his Federation role is, the taxing life on a movie set was an extreme challenge for him. He would wake at 1:30 a.m. to be in makeup by 2, leave makeup at 4:30 to be on the set by 5 to catch the first daylight, and then film all day and well into the night as the temperatures climbed to nearly 130 degrees, day in and day out. The Rock fell ill with heatstroke, along with many others on the set.

It was during this time of extreme stress and illness, however, that The Rock gave Universal executives a good look at the kind of fortitude and work ethic he brings to any project to which he is attached.

**"Always entertaining the fans and knowing that I'm entertaining them...nothing compares to that."**

"He had a 102 degree fever, heavy shivering and sweats, but he kept going at it," Jacks says. "The director came up



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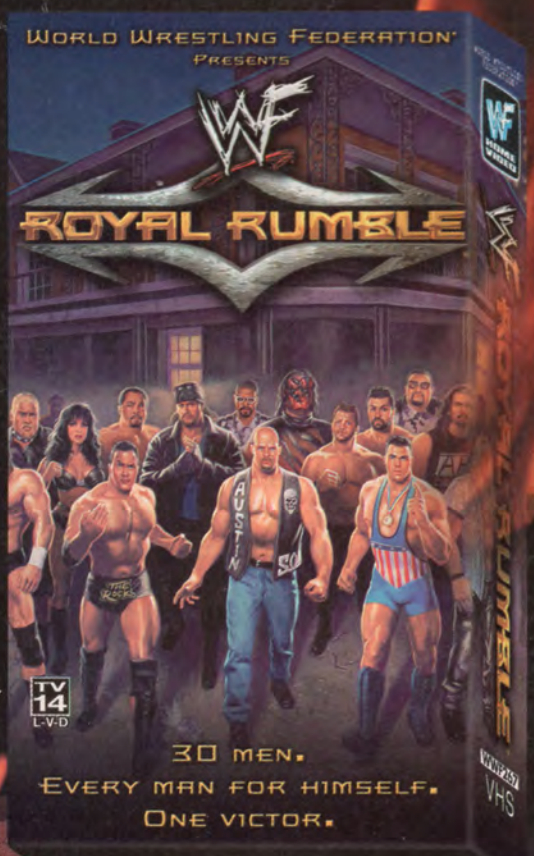


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# RAW MEAT

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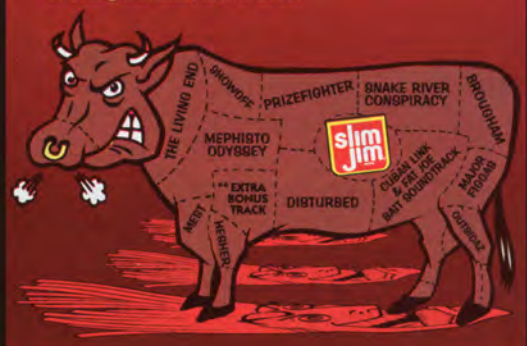


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with a really good idea that wasn't on the storyboards—it wasn't part of the shot list. We didn't really need it, but it would have been cool to get. It involved The Rock walking across a sand dune. Now, these are some of the biggest sand dunes in the world, and for a 275-pound man, it's extra tough because you sink really deeply into them. He had to walk about half a mile, and he was really ill.

"We asked him if he wanted to do it because it would really add to the movie. He didn't have to do it, and we told him that. But, as sick as he was, he said, 'No, no, let's do it. If it's going to be good for the movie, I want to do it.' And not everyone does that. But he sucked it up and did it. He really showed me a lot by doing that, because he easily could have said no."

**"Regardless of whether I do movies, one way or another, The Rock will always be a part of the Federation."**

The Rock also made a point of quickly disarming any hesitation or skepticism that was waiting for him from his fellow actors, virtually all of whom had a good deal of prior movie experience. It was only natural, The Rock says, that there would be a degree of uncertainty coming from professional actors about working with a man who was making his first movie appearance.

"It's unavoidable," he says, "especially with *The Mummy Returns,* working with the original cast [from *The Mummy*]. There are some big names there—Brendan Fraser, Rachel Weisz, Adewale [Akinnouye-Agbaje, who also stars on the HBO series *Oz*]. The preconceived notion on the set was, 'Oh, The Rock is coming. This should be interesting.' But I went in there completely open to any suggestions or any help, and I made them completely aware of that. 'Guys, I'm here and I'm going to give you my absolute best, but I want your input—I *need* your input—so, please, help me.' Once that happens, there's a wall that breaks down for everybody. They came to the conclusion that, 'Okay, The Rock is cool.' And it's very important for me, too, that I treat the makeup artist just the same as I would treat the director. I'm the same way in the WF. That's important to me."

The Rock came off his first movie set with kudos for his performance, both in front of and away from the camera. "Usually, only a small percentage of actors on any [movie] set are classically trained," said *The Mummy Returns* director Stephen Sommers. "Some of the best actors I've worked with are naturals…I found The Rock to be a natural. He took direction quickly and easily. His natural charm and confidence will take him far as an actor."

In order to ease his way into his new career, The Rock says he has surrounded himself with a small but invaluable group of advisors, including Federation chairman Vince McMahon. Agents Darren Statt and Marty Adelstein and the personnel at Universal also form a key component of "Team Rock," and The Rock isn't shy about relying on them for advice, support and help.

The Rock has also made friends with several big hitters in Hollywood, many of whom are self-professed fans of his work in the Federation. Yet, no one has emerged as a Yoda-like figure, giving The Rock all the answers in terms of acting.

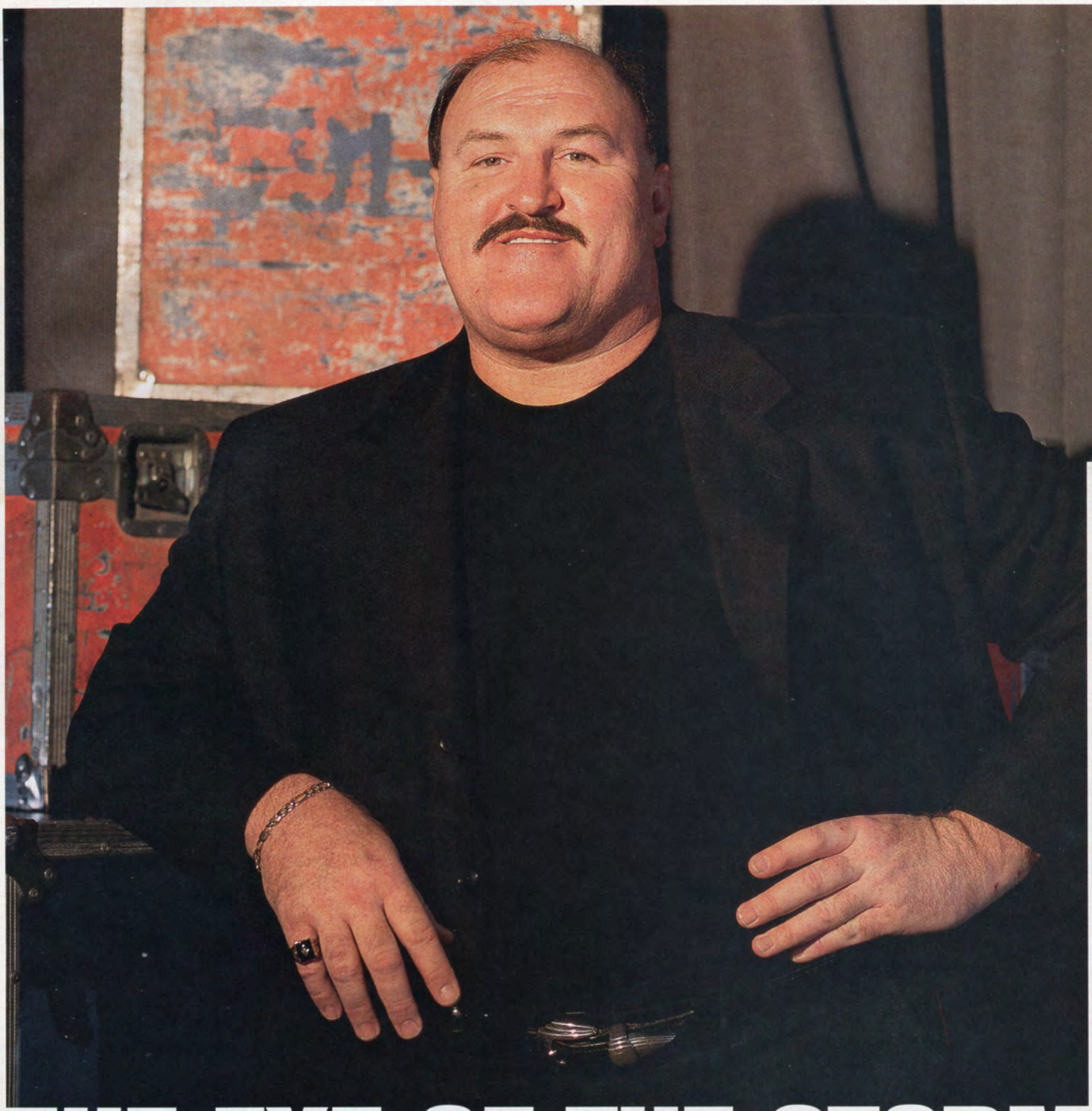
"It's not like anyone has come up to me and said, 'Rock, here is the key to what you have to do to be successful,'" he says. "I can only tell you what guys in the industry who have done very, very well for themselves, from Sylvester Stallone to Will Smith and Nicolas Cage and Michael Clarke Duncan, have told me: 'You certainly have what it takes. Just keep doing your thing.'"

Even The Rock, easily one of the most recognizable entertainers in the world, admits he has been star-struck at times, like when he met Jack Nicholson, or the time Stallone made his way over at a Los Angeles Lakers game and told him he was a fan. Susan Sarandon, too, recently introduced herself to The Rock at a Federation event and said she was a fan of his work.

**As he has done in the World Wrestling Federation, The Rock is ready and eager to take the ball and run with it as far as he can in the entertainment industry.**

Yet, with all the perks and flattery of moving to the cusp of movie stardom and rubbing elbows with the Stallones and Cages of the world, The Rock makes one thing clear: the Federation is his home and his first love—then, now and into the future.

"I think at this point it's safe to say that acting will be my post-Federation career. I enjoy acting so much that I've made it a short-term and long-term goal of mine. I just have to get the wheel in motion to make those goals happen. Regardless of whether I do movies, one way or another, The Rock will always be a part of the World Wrestling Federation. You can count on that. Because with everything I've done in the WF, there's still so much that I want to do. I still have a lot of goals left here." ■



# THE EYE OF THE STORM

## Ten Years after *WrestleMania VII,* Sgt. Slaughter Looks Back

The transition was staggering. Within a matter of months, Sgt. Slaughter had gone from semi-retirement in the collapsing American Wrestling Association (AWA) to being World Wrestling Federation Champion and the No. 1 heel in the business. Just as the career of Slaughter—one of sports-entertainment's great icons—seemed to be winding down, he suddenly found himself on the road to headlining *WrestleMania.*

Sgt. Slaughter sits in an empty Madison Square Garden as the ring crew prepares for the night's *SmackDown!* taping. Here at the site of some of his most historic matches against fellow legends like Pat Patterson and the Iron Sheik, the Sarge's memory is quickly jogged as he discusses the events of a decade ago. But the story begins a few

By Brian Solomon

years before that, he explains, back to when he was one of the World Wrestling Federation's most beloved heroes.

In 1984, the Federation was on its way to becoming the international entity it is today. Riding on the crest of the "Rock 'n' Wrestling Connection," sports-entertainment had turned into a cultural phenomenon. Along with Superstars like Hulk Hogan and Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka, Sgt. Slaughter was now a household name. He had earned the heartfelt allegiance of Federation fans thanks to his role as the all-American defender of democracy. Then, suddenly, as the Federation's popularity began its unprecedented rise, he was gone.

When his mother took ill, Slaughter decided he needed to be with his family in Charlotte, North Carolina. This, compounded with contractual problems, led him to ask for his release. Although Vince McMahon was reluctant to see one of his top Superstars go, he understood the circumstances—McMahon's own father was ill at the time. He granted Slaughter his wish.

"It was a hard decision for me to leave," Slaughter relates. "But I had to think of my family first. I eventually got back to where I was. I missed about six *WrestleManias* on the way, but I can't look back and say I should have done it differently, because I think I did what was best for me and my family."

Slaughter began working for Jim Crockett's Carolina-based NWA territory in order to stay close to his family. Some years later, he accepted a lucrative offer from the struggling AWA. But his relationship with the nearly bankrupt Midwestern promotion soured once he realized they had no intention of coming through on any of the promises they had made to him.

The Sarge's mainstream popularity led to his becoming a part of the popular '80s cartoon program *GI Joe,* which helped him maintain his high profile through the remainder of the decade. His animated character was an exact representation of his patriotic wrestling persona, which further ingrained it into the minds of the American public. By 1990, Slaughter was able to retire from the sports-entertainment business, continuing to do promotional work for the *GI Joe* franchise.

The career of one of wrestling's most famous figures was seemingly at an end, but little did anyone know that the high point was yet to come. And it all started with a phone call.

"I was sitting at home watching a NASCAR race on a Sunday afternoon," he remembers, "kind of falling asleep on the couch, when I got a call. I said, 'Hello?' and a voice said, 'Sarge?' I said, 'Yes?' and he said, 'Vince.' Well, there's only one Vince and only one Sarge, so I woke up a little bit."

McMahon had an idea about bringing Sgt. Slaughter back to the World Wrestling Federation, something that would thrust him right back under the sports-entertainment spotlight. He invited the Sarge to Stamford to discuss the possibilities. The plan he unfolded was far from what the former Marine expected.

"The hair stood up on my neck, and I thought, 'This can't be true,'" Slaughter says. "I thought he was calling me in to talk about coming in and being the good guy and the all-American hero,

and playing off *GI Joe*. But he was going in the opposite direction."

At the time, the Middle East was in turmoil. Kuwait had just been invaded by neighboring Iraq, causing an international incident that threatened to draw the United States into a war. In an effort to keep the Federation product relevant to world events, McMahon mapped out a plan to have the beloved Sgt. Slaughter turn traitor and become an Iraqi sympathizer. The intention was to transform Slaughter from one of the sport's most popular Superstars to one of its most despised.

Sarge knew that what Vince was asking would have major repercussions on his life and his career. Essentially, *he was being asked to tear down a deep-rooted fan allegiance it had taken* years to build. After several weeks of thinking it over and discussing it with his initially hesitant wife, Slaughter accepted the proposal, and set off on one of the most bizarre comebacks ever.

The former drill instructor was reintroduced to the Federation at *SummerSlam '90,* in Philadelphia of all places. There, on a segment of the Brother Love Show, he declared his allegiance to the nation of Iraq and its leader, Saddam Hussein. In the following weeks, he filmed several vignettes and promos in which he verbally trashed the nation he had once represented. Almost immediately, the tide of fan approval turned, just as Slaughter and McMahon had hoped. The Sarge had become the Federation's top heel.

Wearing an Iraqi uniform complete with Saddam-like beret, Slaughter next introduced his manager, Gen. Adnan, a former wrestler who was the spitting image of Hussein himself.

"He came into Hershey, Pennsylvania, for a photo shoot, that was his first night in," Slaughter says of Adnan. "When he walked into the office, I thought he was Saddam. He looked just like him!"

The hatred of fans escalated. Then, at the *1991 Royal Rumble* in Miami, the unthinkable happened: Sgt. Slaughter won the Federation Championship from The Ultimate Warrior, the man many observers had pegged as the next great titleholder. Slaughter recalls things beginning to get a little scary from that point on.

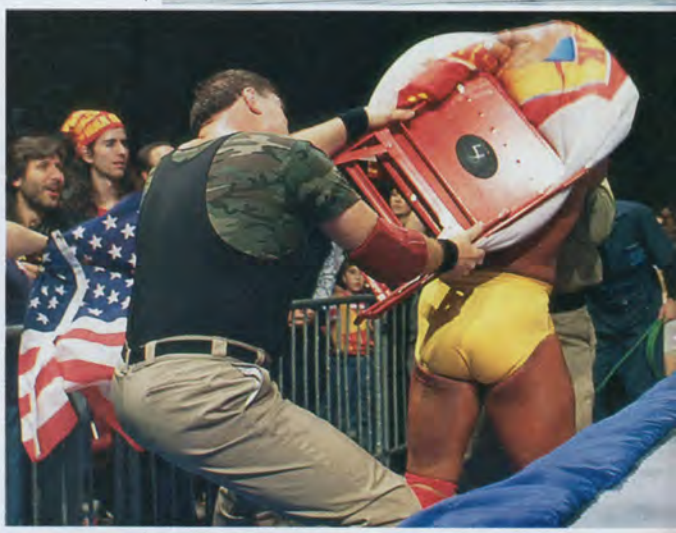
"At that time in the business, you stayed and did promos for a couple of hours [after the show]. That night I won the title, I didn't leave the building until about two in the morning, and there were still people out there yelling and threatening us."

As the road to *WrestleMania* began, it appeared that the plan was working well; almost *too* well. The animosity directed towards Slaughter was of an intensity experienced by few—if any—*heels in the history of the game. By the beginning of 1991, Operation Desert* Storm had begun in the Persian Gulf, and many fans did not take too kindly to the Sarge's apparent loyalty to a nation with which the U.S. was openly at war.

Soon, death threats began to be made against the new champion. At one point, Slaughter's family was temporarily relocated after someone threatened to bomb his house, and for several weeks after they returned home, they had armed guards to accompany them wherever they went. After having three rental cars destroyed, Slaughter had to have special travel arrangements made, which consisted of he and the General being transported to the arena in a limousine after the beginning of the show to compete in the match before the intermission, and then quickly leaving in the limo before the show was over.

It got to the point where Vince McMahon himself became unsure about continuing the angle. But the Sarge insisted on moving forward with it. Despite mounting pressure from outside, McMahon stood by the decision of his friend and employee.

"Vince had a lot of problems with sponsors, but Vince has never been one to back down from anybody," Slaughter says. "If they didn't want to promote on the show, that was fine with him.



He'd find somebody else to do it. He was always good to have behind you, because he stuck with you through thick and thin."

*WrestleMania VII* loomed, and it was announced that the main event would have Slaughter defending his title against former champion Hulk Hogan, the ultimate "Real American." The promotional machine kicked into

high gear, and Slaughter vs. Hogan became the most anticipated match in the sport. Not only was Slaughter back on top, but he now found himself in a more enviable position than he had ever before enjoyed. After having just about packed it in for good, he was now in the main event of the biggest spectacle of the year. Even Slaughter himself marvels at the dramatic course his career had taken.

"There I was. I had been sitting on the couch one afternoon, and just a few months later, I'm on top of the wrestling world again."

Originally, *WrestleMania VII* had been booked for the outdoor Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, but the potential risk of bomb threats led to the show being moved to the smaller L.A. Sports Arena nearby. On March 24, 1991, with thousands of fans watching live and a record pay-per-view audience watching from home, the Sarge and the Hulkster finally collided. Slaughter lost the belt that night, but even that couldn't tarnish the experience of competing in *WrestleMania* at the top of the card.

**"The hair stood up on my neck, and I thought, 'This can't be true.' I thought he was calling me in to talk about coming in and being the good guy and the all-American hero, and playing off *GI Joe.* But he was going in the opposite direction."**

"The thrill of being in the main event of *WrestleMania,* there's nothing like it," the Sarge says. "To have a match where people say, 'That was a hell of a match' was worth it."

Slaughter also participated in something fairly revolutionary after the match. In that era, where the good guy usually settled the score and moved on, it was unheard of to continue a feud after *WrestleMania.* But this time was different. After suffering defeat, Slaughter and Adnan retreated to Hulk's dressing room, and when the new titleholder entered, he was greeted with a fireball to the face courtesy of the Sarge. The main event feud would continue beyond *WrestleMania,* something that didn't happen again until the The Rock and Stone Cold Steve Austin did it in 1999.

After the highpoint of *WrestleMania VII,* the Slaughter/Hogan feud eventually ran its course. By the end of 1991, Slaughter had actually pulled off the incredible feat of winning over the fans again, renouncing his Iraqi sympathies and taking up the red, white and blue once more. His time in the ring eventually wound down, but he has remained an active part of the Federation family, taking on duties as a producer and backstage agent. He has still been known to lace up the boots from time to time—such as his memorable Boot Camp match with Triple H at *In Your House: D-Generation X* in 1997—and still carries his wrestling gear with him to every event. But *WrestleMania VII* will forever remain a crowning achievement in his legendary career.

In recent years, Slaughter has been flattered that several of today's Superstars have approached him with questions about what it was like to headline *WrestleMania.* Top competitors like The Rock and Triple H, who now find themselves doing what he did 10 years ago, have sought out the Sarge for advice on how to handle being in the main event of the crown jewel of sports-entertainment. For Sgt. Slaughter, his new role as adviser is an honor, and another benefit of a truly stellar career. Despite how long it took to finally happen, main-eventing *WrestleMania* was the pinnacle of his years of hard work.

"*WrestleMania* is without a doubt the greatest entertainment event and spectacle in the world," he declares as the ring crew behind him sets the stage for the legends of tomorrow. "It's just gonna keep growing and growing. I'm glad I was a part of it then, and I still am today." ■

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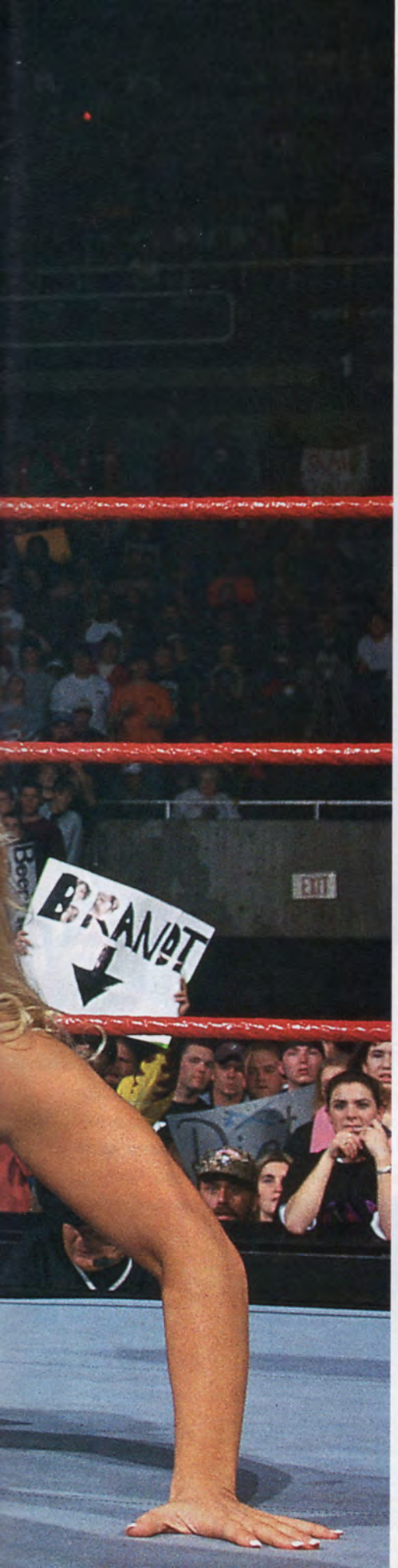



# Learning from the Best

## Dean Malenko's Wrestling School Prepared Molly Holly for the Rigors of the Ring

By Brian Solomon

Watching Molly Holly compete, it's easy to see that she knows her way around a ring. With a repertoire that consists of much more than throwing an opponent around by the hair, this Federation newcomer has proven that she can actually wrestle. And it's no wonder, considering where she got her training.

In the spring of 1997, Molly Holly began preparing for a career in sports-entertainment. She soon made her way to the independent circuit, where she competed under the name Starla Saxon. After meeting Malia Hosaka in the ring on several occasions, she developed a camaraderie with the Japanese-American veteran. This friendship would lead to bigger things.

Hosaka was acquainted with Terry Taylor, who at the time was a prominent official in World Championship Wrestling (WCW). When Taylor hired Hosaka to participate in dark matches at WCW television tapings, it was Molly who she suggested as her opponent. Less than four months into her wrestling career, Molly Holly was working for the second-largest sports-entertainment organization in the United States.

Before long, she began appearing on television as a valet for Randy "Macho Man" Savage, using the names Mona and Miss Madness. Her time in the ring was scaled down, but she occasionally competed with Hosaka and others. It was in 1998, after a match with Hosaka at Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida, that she first met Dean Malenko, who was also in WCW.

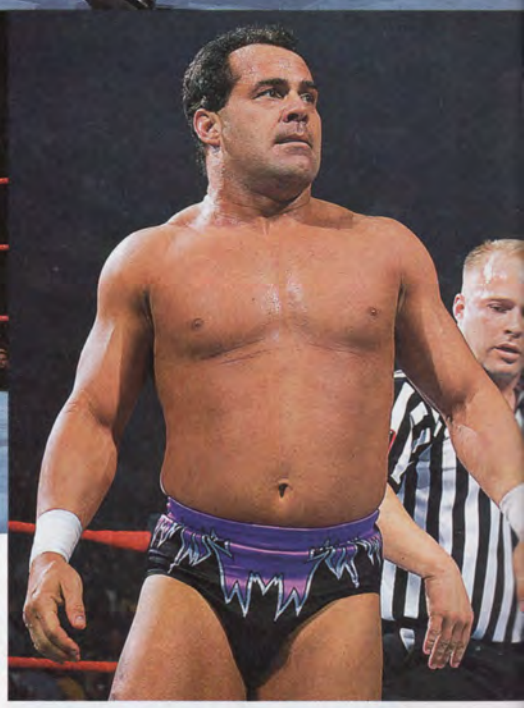
"She was really gifted," Malenko recalls. "When I first saw her, she was talented but very raw."

Malenko invited "Miss Madness" to his wrestling school in Tampa. Established in 1978 by Dean's father

Boris Malenko, the Malenko wrestling school had produced graduates ranging from current Federation Superstars X-Pac and Kane, to WCW competitors Norman Smiley and Prince Iaukea, to past stars like Al Perez, Barry Horowitz and the Shockmaster.

"I was ecstatic," says Molly of the opportunity. "I had been a huge fan of Dean Malenko and was really looking forward to training with him."

She made the trip to Tampa to learn the ropes from the "Man of a Thousand Holds." Malenko and other trainers worked with her on every aspect of her ring technique. Much like fellow Superstar Jacqueline, Molly was taught entirely by men. According to Malenko, that's one of the things that have helped her make a name for herself: "The reason why she kind of sticks out is that she works more like a guy."



One of the sport's true masters of strategy, Malenko saw to it that his well-rounded knowledge of the game's nuances was imparted to his student. Although it was often very difficult, Molly has nothing but glowing words about the experience.

"It was so fantastic because [Dean] didn't just teach me a move, he would explain why you do it and how it relates to the match."

Psychology was a major part of Molly's wrestling lessons. For Malenko, simply knowing how to execute a hold or maneuver is not enough. There's a lot more to being a successful grappler, and the second-generation veteran made sure that Molly, as well as all his pupils, understood that.

As grueling as the work may have been, Molly proved to be a quick study. Malenko has fond memories of her days at the school.

"She was a joy to work with," he says. "It was fun working with her because she picked up on things immediately. She's got a really good mind for the business."

It wasn't long before Molly's ring work began to show a marked improvement. Nevertheless, WCW never quite used her to full potential, keeping her mainly in the role of valet. When her contract was up, she parted ways with the organization. Her past relationship with Malenko would soon come into play.

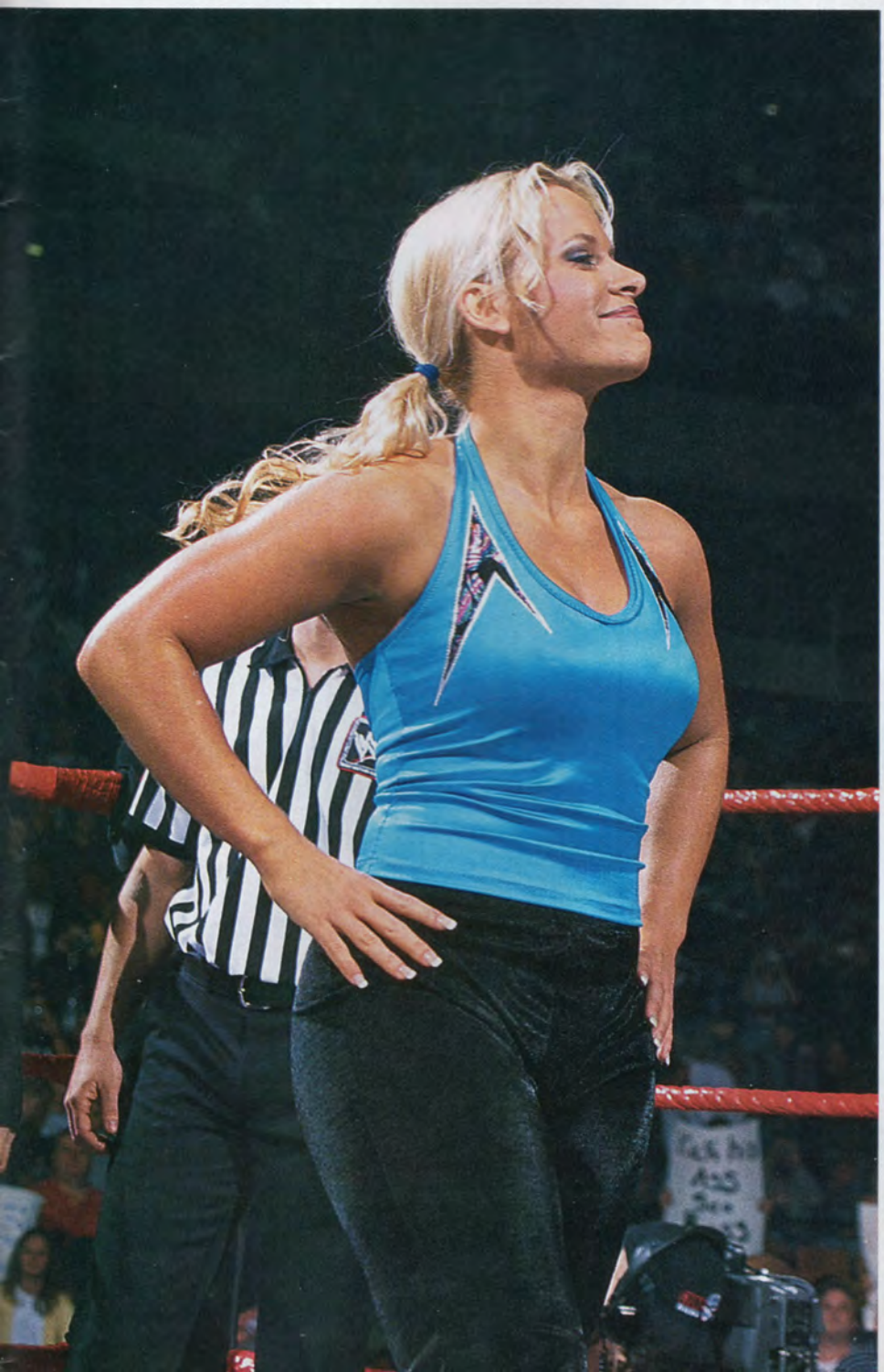
**"She was a joy to train... because she picked up on things immediately," says Dean Malenko of Molly.**

By 2000, Dean Malenko had left WCW and entered the World Wrestling Federation along with his three fellow Radicalz, Chris Benoit, Eddie Guerrero and Perry Saturn.

Shortly after Molly's release from WCW became official, Malenko brought her to the attention of Federation senior vice president of talent relations and wrestling administration Jim Ross and vice president of talent relations Bruce Prichard. Her former mentor truly believed that she would make a worthy addition to the Federation's vibrant talent roster.

Since debuting in the Federation several months ago, Molly has rewarded his faith with quick success. She has received a great deal more exposure than she ever enjoyed in her days as Miss Madness. As she climbs the ranks, Malenko continues to keep his eye on her, offering advice whenever needed. And he continues to be impressed by what he sees.

"I think she's doing really well," says Malenko of Molly's progress in the Federation. "She's the type of person who adjusts well. She brings a lot to the table every time she steps in the ring. I wouldn't label her as strictly 'eye candy,' either. She's attractive, but I think fans are so infatuated with her wrestling ability that they're not just looking at her body."



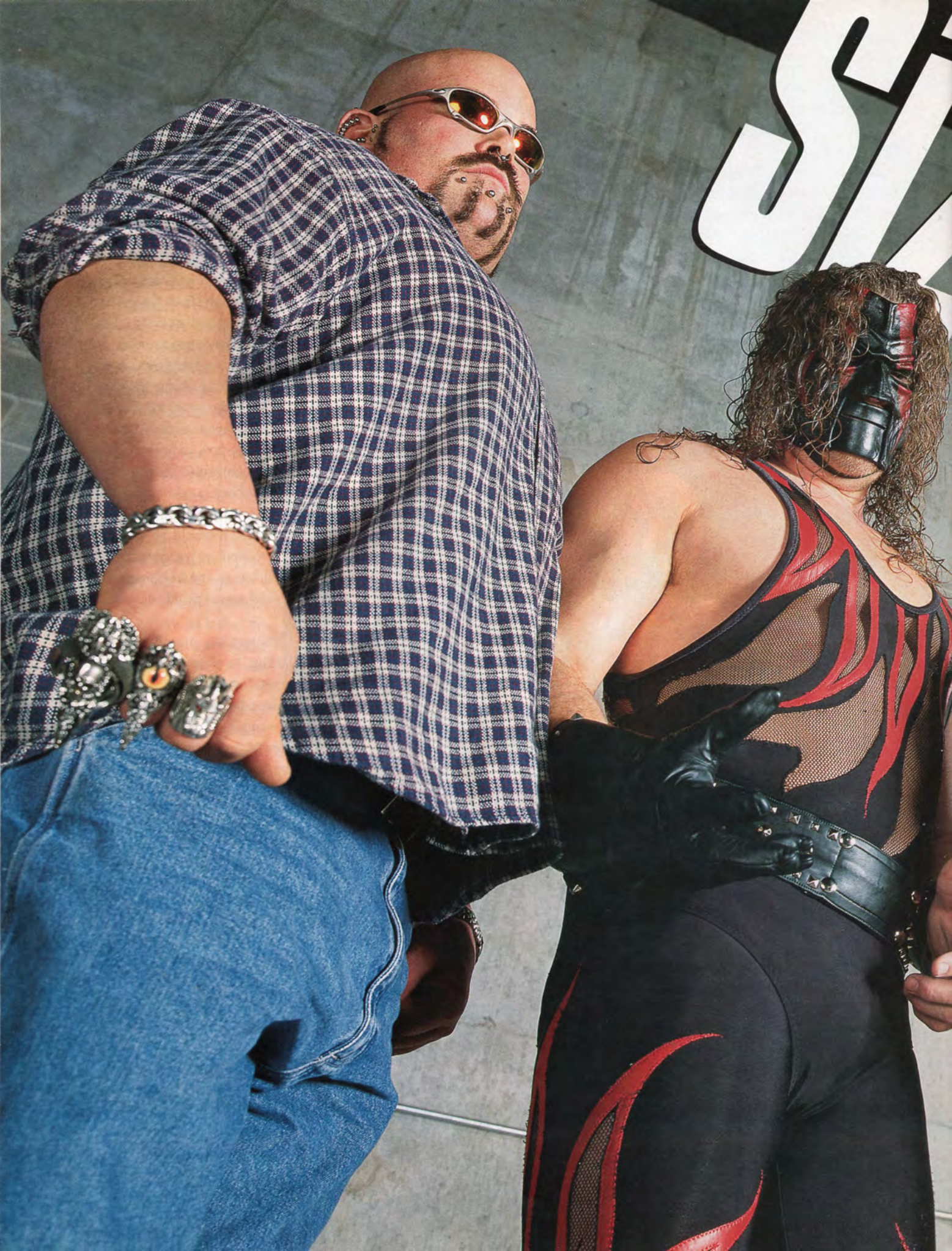
Indeed, some of Molly's matches against the likes of Ivory and Jacqueline have rivaled those of any male Superstar in terms of action and excitement. Her athletic background, which includes powerlifting and gymnastics, has naturally been a tremendous help in preparing her for the sport of kings. But her work in Tampa is what gave her the technical know-how to become the standout female competitor she is today.

When you've been taught by one of the most expert practitioners to ever step through the ropes, it would be foolish not to attempt to emulate your instructor. Molly is no different; she freely admits being greatly influenced by the masterful Malenko.

"I like to start my matches with chain wrestling, to show that I know how to wrestle," she explains. "I use a lot of the things he taught me, a lot of things I've seen him do in his matches with, say, Rey Mysterio, Jr. I try to copy certain things I admire about his work, but I have developed my own style along the way."

So the next time you watch Molly Holly compete, don't be surprised by what you see. A classic collar-and-elbow tie-up to start the match. A DDT delivered with pinpoint accuracy. Things you might not expect from a women's bout. If you watch closely, you'll see the Malenko influence plain and clear.

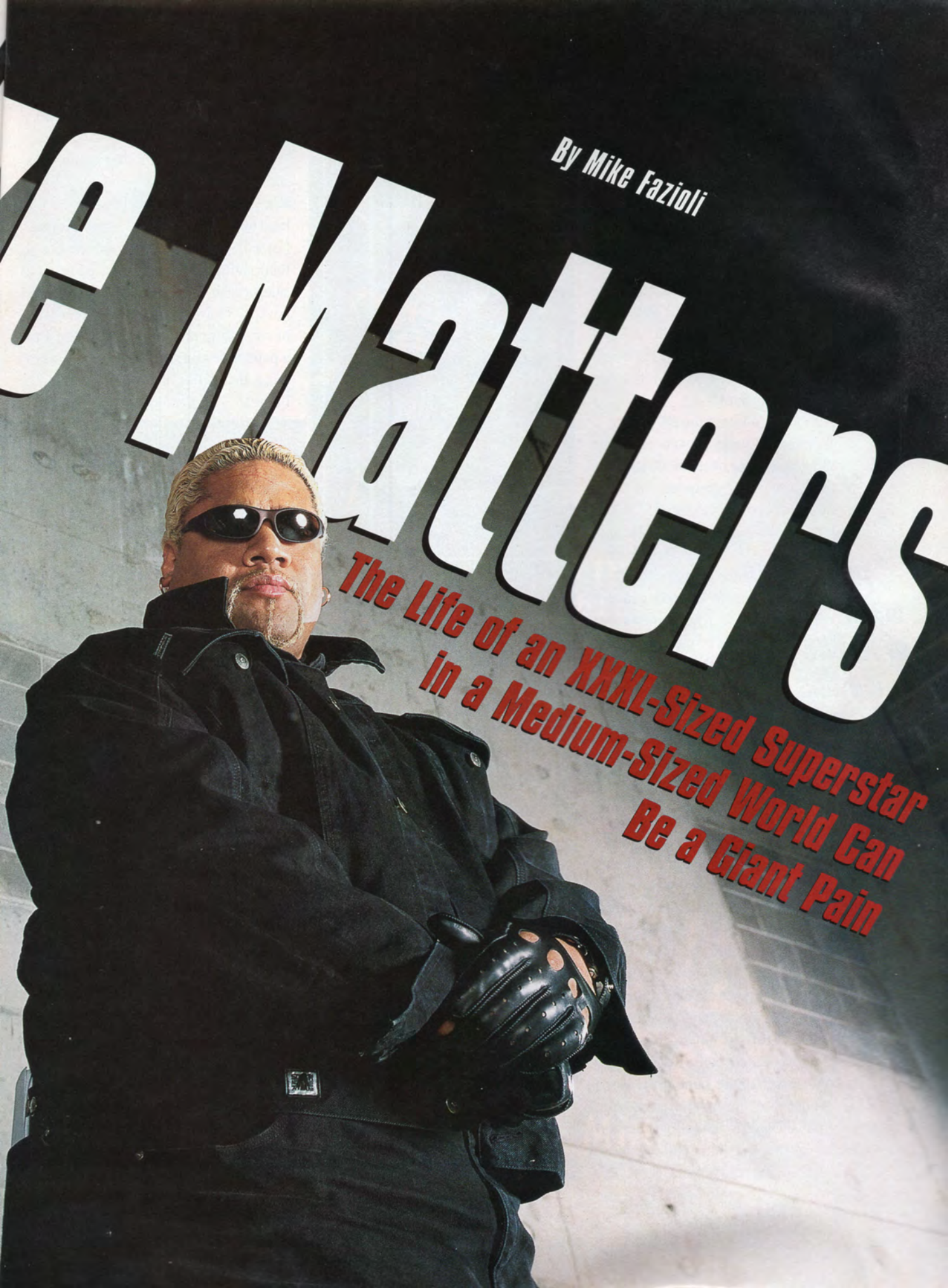
After more than 20 years of operation, the Malenko wrestling school was closed not long ago. Nevertheless, Molly Holly has kept its memory alive by continuing to use the priceless insight and knowledge she gained there. As her opponents continue to find out, she's much more than just a pretty face. ■



# e Matters

By Mike Fazioli

## The Life of an XXXL-Sized Superstar in a Medium-Sized World Can Be a Giant Pain



Whoever came up with the saying "size doesn't matter" must have been small. If you are a big person trying to squeeze into a coach seat on an airplane, fit into a hotel bed or any number of things that normal-sized people take for granted, size matters a great deal, indeed.

"I really feel for the big guys, the real big guys," says World Wrestling Federation referee Tim White. "It's hard enough living on the road and performing every day. To run into those aggravations is hard."

Although White himself is not a large man, for years he saw firsthand the biggest athlete of them all struggle to live in a world designed for more modestly proportioned people. White was the traveling partner of the late Andre the Giant, helping the over-7'4", 500-pound legend try to find comfortable accommodations while on the road. It wasn't an easy task.

**"You have to make the best of it. God gave me this size body, so I have to be able to handle it."**

Virtually every make and model of car was too small to fit the massive Frenchman, so White would secure a van for Andre to travel in. Some of the most mundane tasks—dialing a rotary phone, using the bathroom, turning on a light switch—were made difficult or impossible because of Andre's immense size.

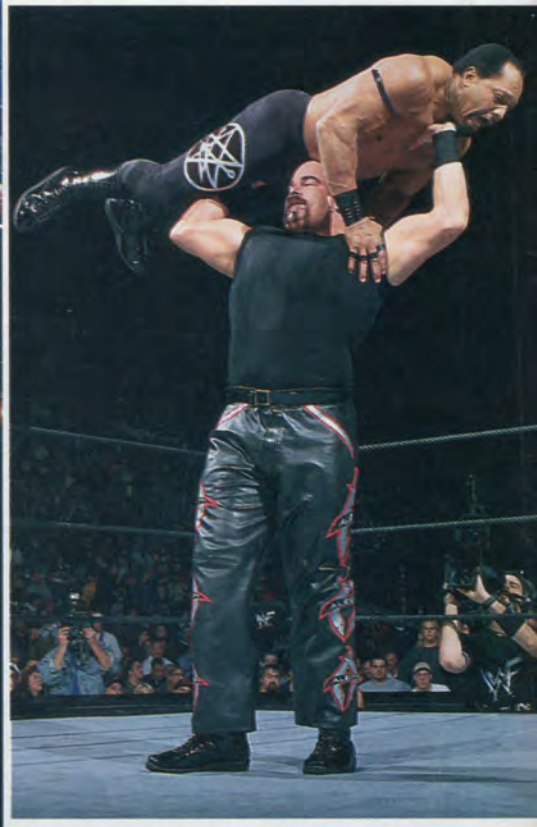
"It was really hard for me to watch him go through the pain of trying to fit into things. It was like putting a St. Bernard in a birdcage," White says.

While certainly not to the extent that Andre endured, some Superstars of today also suffer the same cruel irony that Andre lived through for years—the very physical gifts that allow them to be successful in sports-entertainment can also hamper many aspects of their day-to-day living, particularly on the road.

Shopping for clothing and shoes is clearly something most people take for granted; you walk into a store, see something you like, try it on and buy it.

But when you're the size of Rikishi (6'1", 401 lbs.) or Albert (6'7", 345 lbs.) or Kane (7'0", 326 lbs.), it seldom works that way.

"It does get frustrating sometimes picking out clothes or shoes," says Rikishi. "I wear a size-15 shoe, so it's hard to find those in shoe stores. Normal [-sized] guys go right to the rack and their shoes are right there. I go up to a salesperson, and he says, 'We don't have it.' I have to go to a different type of store. It gets to be a hassle. But, I'm a patient person; I'd rather order something that I like than grab something I don't."



**If size and brute strength are the name of the game, these guys are in the right business.**

"I have a hard time finding shirts to fit my chest [64" relaxed]," says Albert. "For pants, I take a 40, but my ass and legs are big. I usually have to get them altered. In shoes, I take a 15, so they're tough, too. I help 'Big & Tall' do pretty well."

Rikishi is lucky in the clothes department. His Rikishi Phat Wear line of clothing is made in his size, which

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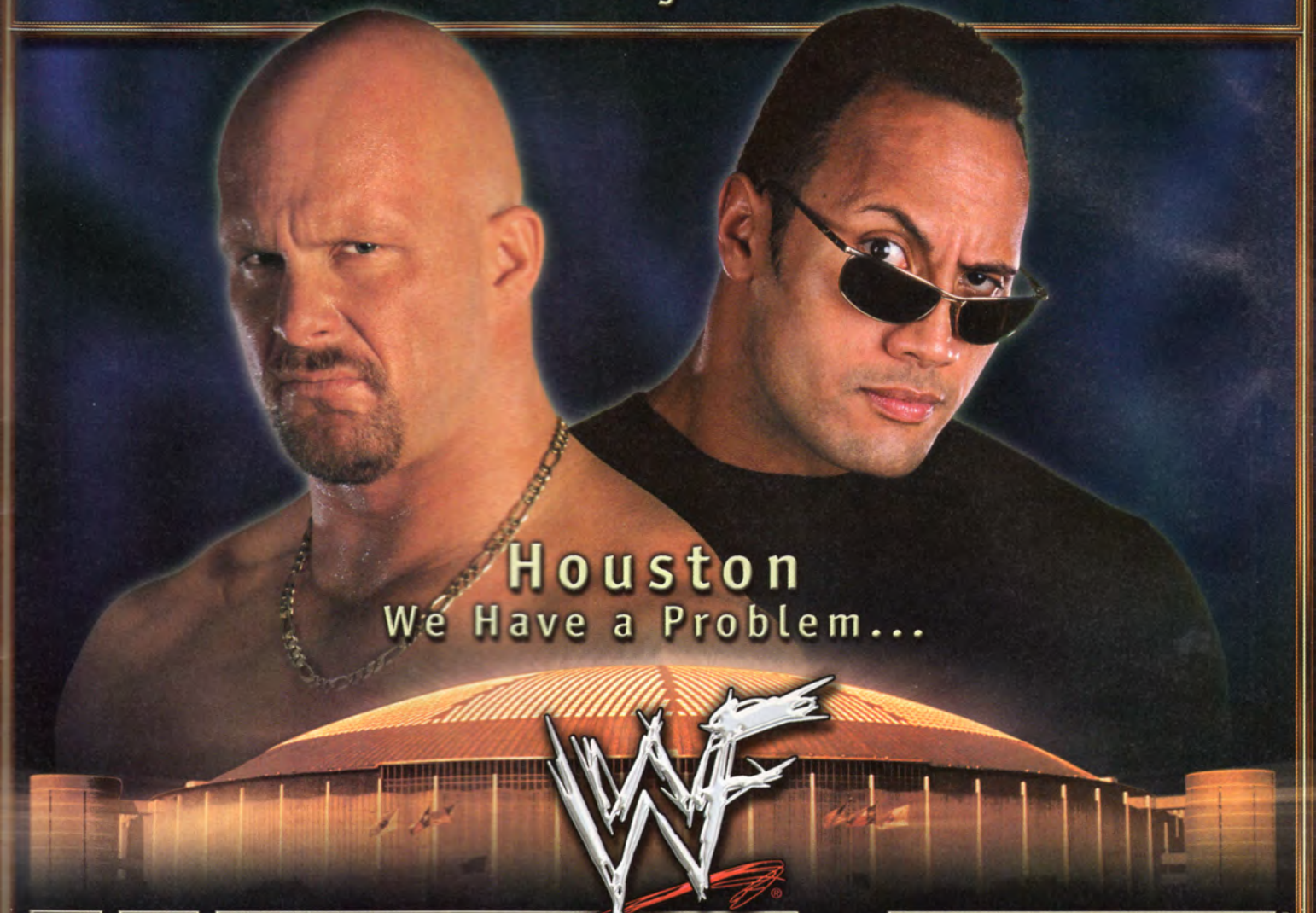


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allows him to steer clear of the specialty-sized stores.

According to White, Andre had a tailor in Japan who took his measurements and custom-made the Giant's wardrobe for him, including his shoes. Andre's feet were not only an amazing 24 inches—two full feet—long, but also several inches thick. Casts were made of his feet and shoes custom-made from the casts.

The Federation's grueling travel schedule—usually at least three shows a week, year-round—also makes for tough times for the bigger Superstars. Although most try to fly first-class or by charter, Albert has taken his chances, squeezing his massive frame into a coach seat. He greatly prefers taking the window seat, but things don't always work out, which is bad news for Albert—and even worse for his rowmates.

**The late Andre the Giant is still the standard when it comes to sheer immensity.**

"There have been times when I've been put in a middle seat. When I get there, I'll ask one of the people next to me if I can switch with them," he says. "If they won't move, I say, 'Okay, fine,' and put up the arm rests. To which they usually reply, 'I'd like to have the arm rests down.' My response, 'I'm sure you would, but it's not going down.'"

One of the tallest Superstars on the roster, Kane has had mishaps on planes that no average-height person could ever imagine.

"I can't tell you how many times I've just about scalped myself on those little exit signs in the airplane's aisles," says Kane. "The signs are supposed to promote safety, but they're just high enough that I think I can get under them, and they hit me right on the crown of my head. Yeah, that's real safe."

Of course, these problems pale in comparison to what Andre went through. The skies weren't exactly friendly for the Eighth Wonder of the World.

"In several planes, even first-class seats aren't much bigger than coach seats," White says. "We'd have to get a hold of the mechanics and have them take out the divider between the seats. When we were forced on flights where we couldn't get first class, we'd have to get three seats together for him. But even then his head would be touching the ceiling. It was very, very uncomfortable and awkward for him. But let's face it, the world is built around normal-sized people, and Andre was way above normal size. Everything was difficult."

And the flight is often only the beginning of the hassles. Hotel rooms, too, are not designed with oversized people in mind. And again, it's the little things that provide the biggest headaches.

"The beds are usually way too short," Kane says. "I just scrunch up pretty good to fit in the bed. I hang off most of them. The shower-heads hit you down in the chest. Things like that."

**"The world is built around normal-sized people, and Andre was way above normal-sized."**

"I sleep diagonally to fit in the beds," Albert says. "The shower nozzles get my chest really well. I have to wash myself in sections. I do one side, then turn to get the other side. They're tough to turn around in, too."

Aside from trying to squeeze large bodies into small places, there are the smaller everyday annoyances. Gawking strangers are a part of life, and some Superstars have even encountered small men with "beer muscles" in bars or nightclubs who try to prove their manhood by knocking off the biggest man in the establishment.

Albert says those situations are a true Catch-22: Walk off and you're called a coward, fight and annihilate the smaller man, and you're called a bully—and may potentially be called into court to face a messy and expensive lawsuit. His solution: Walk away and let them say what they will.

"That has never happened to me," Kane says. "That would be a really big mistake."

Yet, as the Superstars relate their stories of life as big men in a small man's world, they're not complaining. To a man, none of them would exchange their size for a simpler life of cozier flights or hotel stays.

Albert says he'd like to write a book one day about himself and a hometown friend who is considerably smaller than he. When the two venture out together, they're usually treated very differently by strangers, with people tending to migrate to him much faster than to his smaller friend.

"I don't let too many things bother me because of my size. I deal with things when they come my way," Rikishi says. "I do what's easier for me. Just because of my size, I don't make things difficult for myself. You have to make the best of it. God gave me this size body, so I have to be able to handle it.

"I never thought my ass would be my way of making it in this business," he adds. "I've been in this business 15 years now. But never in a million years did I think that my wearing a thong would make me a bigger star than ever in the World Wrestling Federation."

As Rikishi stood backstage at New York's Madison Square Garden, telling his story, the imposing Samoan was interrupted two different times by giggling young women seeking autographs. He happily obliged, and when one of the young admirers blurted out a quick compliment telling Rikishi how handsome he is, he smiled and thanked her.

"See, bro," he says with a smile. "It's all right to be big." ■


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**WINNERS LIST:** For winners list, send a S.A.S.E. (VT and WA residents may omit return postage) to: WF, *The Mummy Returns* Sweepstakes Winners List, P.O. Box 1395, Stamford, CT 06904. Requests must be received by April 13, 2001. **Sponsors:** World Wrestling Federation Entertainment, Inc., Stamford, CT, and Universal Studios, Inc., Universal City, CA 91608.

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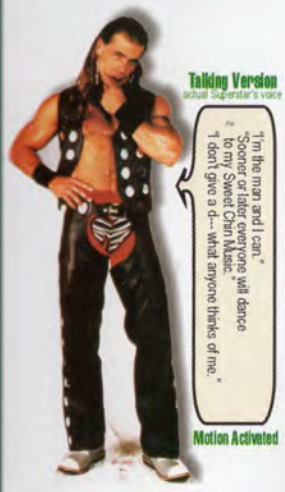

Talking Version
actual Superstar's voice

"I'm the man and I can."
"Sooner or later everyone will dance to my Sweet Chin Music."
"I don't give a d--- what anyone thinks of me."

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"I just opened a can of whoop a-- on ya."
"I just whipped your a--."
"And that's the bottom line cause Stone Cold said so."
"Don't trust anyone."

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"Get your candy a-- back up."
"Know your d--- role and shut your d--- mouth."
"The Rock just laid the smackdown on your monkey a--."

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#310 Regular
**6'2" Tall**

Talking Version
actual Superstar's voice

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"I am the Lord Of Darkness."
"I come from the Dark Side to take your soul."
"You cannot kill what is already dead."

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